

RECOLLECTIONS OF A  
NEW ENGLAND TOWN



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# RECOLLECTIONS

OF A

# NEW ENGLAND TOWN

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BY "FAITH"

(MRS. FRANCES A. BRECKENRIDGE)



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## INTRODUCTION.

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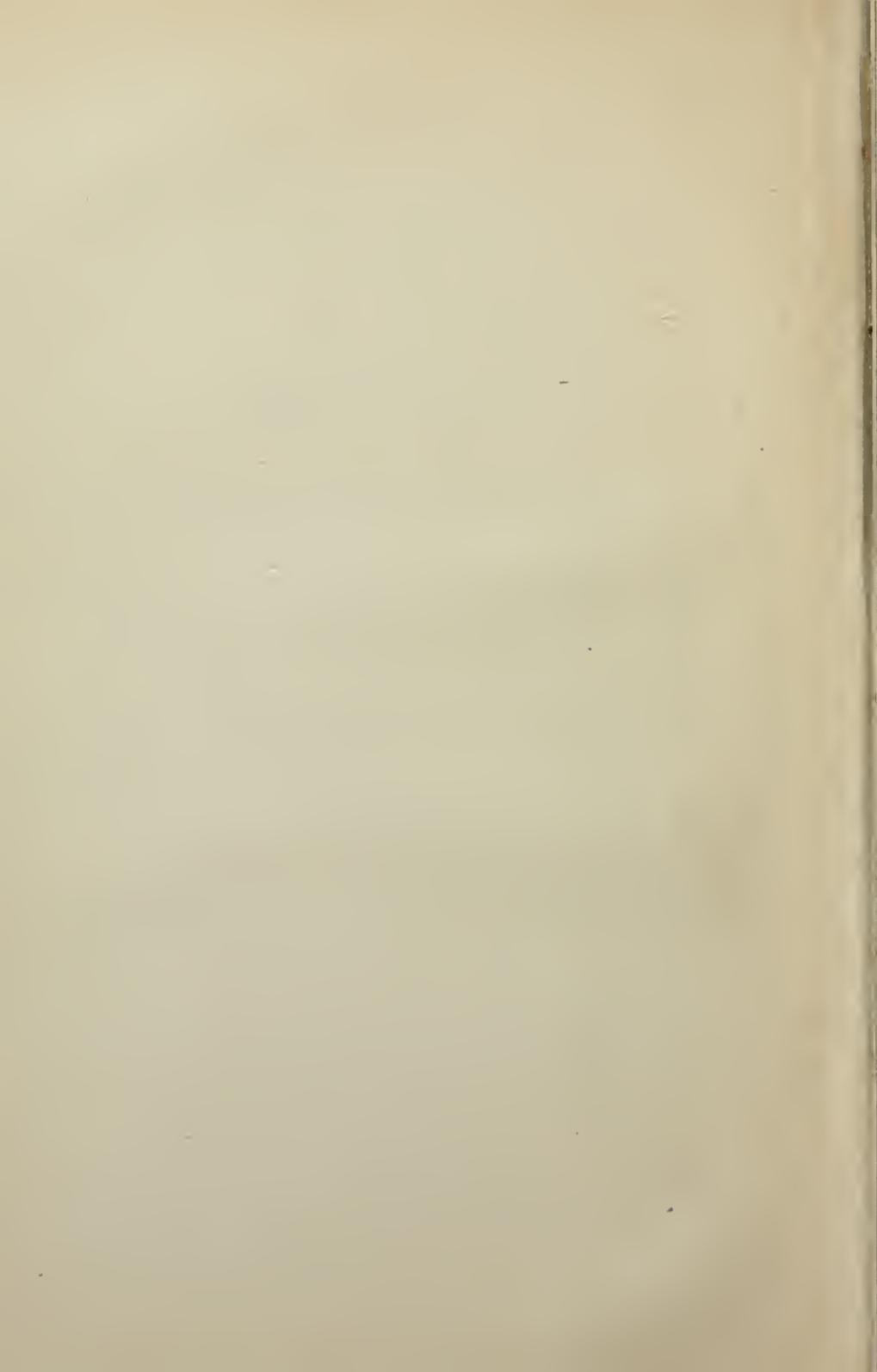
THE interest that attached to the articles on old-time Meriden by "Faith" (Mrs. Frances A. Breckenridge), as printed originally in *The Meriden Daily Journal*, led to the belief that published in book form they would prove entertaining, not only to present and former Meriden people, but to the readers of New England generally; for Meriden as described in "Faith's" quaint way in the following chapters, is typical of the New England villages of the first and second quarters of the century.

To the newspaper articles have been added many chapters on subjects that cannot fail to engage the pleasant attention of all who would like to know what rural New England was like half a century and more ago.

One great value that the work has is the absolutely correct historical information that it contains. What is told here is authenticated by carefully preserved family records, and personal knowledge of the author.

The character of the men and women who lived here two generations since will surely be better understood and appreciated when one has seen them through the eyes of "Faith."

THOS. L. REILLY.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE EARLIER TRADITIONS.

THE southwestern part of Meriden, says Rev. Geo. W. Perkins, in his "Sketches," and Dr. Chas H. S. Davis in his "History of Meriden," was claimed by a small tribe of Indians, "The Mattabesitts." Mr. Daniel Parker, who was born and lived all his long life at the homestead and farm, lying on the eastern slope of the hill west of Hanover Village, told the writer that his grandfather, from whom he inherited his property, knew and had told him the names of certain large rocks at the southern bank of the Quinnipiac River. These rocks were prominent features of the river side until the raising of the dam at the cutlery works set back the water and changed the aforetime rapid river into a broad and placid lake, and thus submerged the rocks. These rocks may be even now identified at low water.

Unfortunately, Mr. Parker could not recall their Indian names. There is still a flint arrow head in the keeping of an elderly person that was picked up in 1848 near the "Copper Mines" at the Walnut Grove Cemetery.

It has been pretty definitely conceded that Meriden was named from a parent town in England. The names of Wallingford and Cheshire were thus derived.

When the very sparse number of settlers and the dangers and difficulties which beset the traveler at that early date are taken into consideration, the idea of "Merry Den" revelries hardly seems consistent. There

was no "Public" to speak of, and the few who traversed the country went for business, and were far more likely to be a grave, sedate and watchful people than to be given to wild and noisy merry-making.

By 1725 the name was identified with all the tract lying between the steep, rocky fells on the east, north and west.

About that year a meeting house was built near the foot of what is at present known as Buckwheat Hill; a burying ground was also set off near the summit of the hill.

Tradition has it that the location was disputed and quarreled over, a method of settling vexed questions not altogether unheard of at this era.

Those whose farms lay at the west of the Old Colony Road, and those whose farms lay close to the eastern hills, and those at the "Plains," each and all of them miles from each other, severally wanted the new meeting house near as possible to themselves.

The east side people seemed to be the most determined, for they drew the lumber in the night over the hill to some spot selected by them.

Somehow, those who carried away the materials at night were made to bring them back by day, and there seems after that to have been no more difficulty.

A cold, bare and comfortless place must that meeting house have been in winter. In summer things would be better.

Those who attended public worship rode on horses, with saddles and "pillions," carrying double, for there was not then or for years after anything with wheels, except the most primitive ox carts, anywhere within miles. The Sunday nooning by the spring (never known to be dry from that far-off day to the present),

must have had something the aspect of a sedate and solemn picnic.

But, oh, the dreary winter funerals! Nothing of softness or grace or beauty was allowed to mitigate the gloom of the Shadow of Death.

It would have been thought indecorous to lay a flower upon the coffin made to order by the nearest carpenter, and outlining as nearly as possible the form of the body it enclosed, sometimes clumsily lined, oftener not, sometimes stained and varnished, often left the color of the elmwood boards, but sometimes painted a crude blue color.

In those days the term "bearers" had a meaning of its own, and the coffin with its burden was carried on men's shoulders up the steep slope to the roughly dug grave.

The words of the prayer and the benediction were fairly blown away by the wind as it swept across the bleak enclosure, bare of either tree or shrub or creeping vine.

Before the year 1779 the meeting house had vanished, but the foundation stones were there for many years after.

Many of the old brown headstones were still to be seen in the cemetery until late in the forties. One by one they had been broken down, or had been built into the surrounding wall.

Some years ago, chiefly through the efforts of the Hon. Dexter R. Wright, then a lawyer in Meriden, a monument was raised on "Burying Ground Hill." This monument records a few names of those buried there.

The last burial on this hill took place more than a century and a half ago.

By far the larger number sleep there unknown and unremembered—"Nameless here for evermore."

## C H A P T E R I I.

### FIRST FACTORIES.

**I**N 1833 Meriden was considered to contain between two and three thousand people within the town limits.

This population, if so many there were, was mostly distributed in groups. These were known as "the Center and the Corner" in the middle of the town, and Clarksville, Prattsville, Webbsville and Hanover in the outskirts.

These divisions were at some distance apart—three or four miles in some instances.

Very prominently to the memory comes the picture of the vividly red building at the head of Prattsville Pond on the east side, with "Clock Factory" painted in brilliant white letters three feet long on the side next the turnpike, and so placed that the attention of the stage passengers might be attracted thereto.

A very striking piece of color the building made, standing so near the stream that sometimes the shadow beneath the water was nearly as distinct as the substance above it, shaded by the hickory, oak, chestnut, maple and butternut trees of the first growth that grew on the east side of the stream, with an undergrowth of birch, sassafras, sweet osier and dog-wood—for all these grew there, each with its own peculiar tint of green.

Doubtless the impression was deepened and the retrospect retained from the fact that one pair of beholding

eyes were fresh from the sand-barrens of South Carolina, where one could dig an inch or two into the sand and find smooth, yellow clay, and cut into it as one might cut into a new cheese, and fashion from it dolls, marbles and even doll's furniture, which could be hardened in the sun.

True, at the South, the yellow jasmine hung from the trees, and the sweet shrub, which was not a shrub at all, but looked like a little red-leaved weed, perfuming the air with its fragrance at the slightest stir, and the trailing arbutus, larger and more fragrant than it grows at the North, could be found in February wherever there was a grove of trees other than pines.

All these were very well if one had nothing better, but they were as nothing to the lovely green turf of the North and splendid dandelions, the swaying wind-flowers, the liverworts, the white bloodroots, the blue violets, and not least, the lovely but, as one soon found out, despised houstonia.

All these beautiful and, to the young, unaccustomed eyes, rare blooms were to be found around Prattsville Pond.

Although even the tradition of a manufactory of clocks in that locality has nearly been lost from the annals of the town, yet it was in its day, and for that period, an extensive business interest, having a branch in Montreal and another in Nashville.

All the movements of these clocks were made of wood. Some of the cases were elaborately carved, really hand carved, not pressed into different forms.

The upper part of the clock doors were of plain glass of course, but the lower part would be decorated in oil, with landscapes and brief truisms, such as

"Time Flies" or "Time is Money" (the latter not so true after all).

But more often were depicted the smiling and amiable aspect of a young woman, with her hair dressed to kill, as was the mode of the day.

Right here one may be permitted to wonder how under the sun those wonderful braids, puffs and immense bows of hair were constructed, that were the fashion at that time.

False hair was only permitted to elderly ladies, who wore "fronts" of aggressive blackness and falseness. The very blackest and falsest being always the Sunday one.

These clock faces, if they had been preserved, would be far more accurate exponents of the costumes of the period, than any of the fashion plates of that era.

The brothers Benjamin, Ira and Hiram Twiss were the business firm.

Ira was the manager at Montreal, Hiram at Nashville, Tenn., and Benjamin divided his time between Meriden and Montreal.

Like most of the enterprises of that day, this one sought the market by sending out "peddlers," who were not in the least disconcerted by the appellation, the term being simply the equivalent of the "salesman" of a later day.

The factory itself, although one of the most imposing at the time, would now be considered a very small affair indeed. All the decorating was done by two or three young women in a shop no larger than an ordinary pantry, located back of the dwelling house at the southwest corner of North Broad and Britannia streets.

After a good many prosperous years the firm failed,

owing, it was said, to the mismanagement of one of the partners.

The property once owned and occupied by the firm in Montreal is said to be, in the year of 1898, worth more than a million dollars.

After the failure of the clock business, Ira Couch started in the same building, early in the forties, the weaving of webbing.

There was nothing significant about that, except that Edwin Curtis invested some money in the concern.

Those who were familiar with Mr. Curtis and his peculiar traits of character would know this to be very remarkable.

There was every reason for expecting a profitable result, but Mr. Couch contracted typhoid fever, which terminated fatally. He was the last of three brothers, who died in early manhood of the same disease. Mr. Curtis could not be induced to go on with the venture, although urged to do so, therefore the business was at once ended.

Although it is not, perhaps, exactly germane to the subject, it seems impossible not to pay a tribute to the courage and energy of Mrs. Couch.

The method of settlement left her with exactly ten dollars. After recovering from the suddenness of the blow, she set herself to the work of providing a home and livelihood for herself and three young children, the youngest a baby boy about two years old.

Being a woman of superior taste, she settled herself into a fashionable millinery business, brought up her three children excellently, and having long before bought the present site of the Winthrop Hotel for a few hundred dollars, sold it for as many thousands.

Mrs. Couch died at an advanced age, much beloved

and respected by those who had known her as a practical exponent of woman's ability, let the "rights and equality" be where they may.

The old clock factory was finally burned down, and there is nothing now to indicate that any structure of the kind ever stood on that spot.

The trees fell long ago, and a railroad track stretches along the bank where their shadows once darkened the stream.

The wintergreen and arbutus, the yellow and the white violets that were plentiful on the eastern bank of the pond, have been cultivated out of existence for a lifetime. All of it is now "but a picture that hangs on memory's wall."

A low dam of logs, with luxuriant ferns growing out of the crevices, retained the water which formed the small reservoir of Prattsville Pond.

This was the water power for the ivory comb works, if the little shop at the south end of the dam could be dignified by the title.

Sometime in those years the dam above at Baldwin's mills gave way, and the pressure of the escaping water carried the Prattsville dam with it.

A higher and more substantial dam of stone was built, which, although repaired from time to time, is practically the present one.

The dam at Baldwin's mills was rebuilt, but was made much more secure at a later period.

The ivory comb business must have been started in the twenties, for in 1833 it was well established.

At that time the relations between the employed and the employer were essentially democratic. The former usually found a home in the family of the latter, with a full welcome to all social privileges.

If for any reason this was not practicable, the employés were located in some family of known respectability and religious character, and a strict watch was kept upon their morals and manners.

Ten o'clock was the regulation hour for retiring for the night, and to be absent from the house after that time was a matter for minute investigation.

Indeed, so exact and strict was this rule, that when Mr. Pratt's oldest son gave what was at that day called "a wedding party," which was held at his father's house, his father insisted that the guests should leave at ten o'clock, and they did.

The character of an applicant for employment was inquired into and sifted before a favorable answer was given, and a church member had the preference. The result being, as might have been expected, a literal indorsement of St. Paul's dictum—that faith without works is dead.

Although the social methods of dealing with those employed were democratic, the hours of labor were despotic, fourteen and fifteen hours being the general rule.

In the summer the hours were from sunrise to sunset, with intervals of three-quarters of an hour for breakfast and half an hour for dinner.

During the shorter winter days breakfast was at six (or before), and work began at half past six. Four days in the week the working hours were from half past six in the morning until nine at night, with an interval of half an hour for dinner and another half hour for supper.

As Saturday night was religiously kept, the comb factories shut down at a quarter to five.

Wages averaged from \$1.25 to \$2.00 per day for men.

Women scarcely earned more than fifty cents per day. Board for men averaged perhaps \$2.00 per week. Women paid seldom more than \$1.25, often not so much.

It must have been about 1833 that the eleven-hour movement was started in Boston, if one does not mistake. Strange as it may seem now, it was bitterly opposed, but finally triumphed by its innate righteousness.

The three ivory comb factories in town in the early thirties were each of them painted light blue, with white trimmings. Why such colors should have been considered the proper insignia of the ivory comb business is a conundrum without an answer.

The largest one, in Prattsville, bore on its front the sign, "Howard, Pratt & Co."

The second in importance was owned and conducted by Walter Webb at Webbsville. This was afterwards partially rebuilt and known as Parker & Whipple. Much enlarged, it is now, in 1898, the Parker Clock Co., with Theodore F. Breese as manager.

The third, and the smallest of the comb factories, was located in the village of Hanover, just below the present dam, which was then only about as high as an ordinary chair. This one was owned and managed by Philo Pratt, and was short-lived.

The methods of comb making were the same in all three of the factories.

The factory in Prattsville stood directly at the south end of the dam. The buildings, one supposes, must be spoken of as two stories in front, but the windows in each story were only of half length. At the back it was one story, and the only entrance was on that side. The "office" was a wooden desk fastened to the wall

opposite the door in the main work room. Here Mr. Julius Pratt sat on a three-legged stool, and here he received visitors, transacted business and arrived at conclusions.

The machinery used was very primitive. No concern, however small or insignificant, would in these later days even look at any appliances as crude as were those, then thought quite progressive.

Certain young persons used to watch with breathless awe the wonderful man who entered the open shed called the wheel-house, and passing over the narrow plank above the water, with his own marvelous hands threw on or off the leather belt which caused the wheel (about as large in diameter as a small tub) to revolve or become stationary, and thus controlled the rush of a cataract that one did not doubt resembled, if it did not rival, Niagara Falls in splendor.

The great ivory tusks, too, had been carried over the hot sands of Africa, and had sailed over leagues of ocean before being finally deposited on the floor of a New England factory.

Often it would happen that the conveying ship would fail of a full cargo of ivory. When this was the case the failure was supplemented by a balance of dates and coffee. Whenever this happened those interested were expected to take each a certain proportion of the latter commodities (and pay for them).

Thus it came to pass that pure Mocha coffee in bags, sewed together with fibre from the date palm by dusky hands in the far eastern country, and not opened until they reached a New England kitchen, was a common beverage. These coffee berries looked like small dried peas. They were improved by keeping..

Dates also were used and eaten in such quantities

that if there is anything in the food theory they ought to have made chronologists of the whole village.

One proof of the futility of that theory may be adduced from the fact that among the most diligent devourers of the sticky fruit, was one individual who could never be perfectly certain in what year Columbus discovered America, or the precise date of the Puritanic debut on Plymouth Rock.

The ivory tusks, always four or five feet long, sometimes six or seven, in rare instances, nine or ten feet, were sawed into blocks or lengths in the lower room facing the road.

The one upper room was reserved, except the office corner, for the finishing processes.

The ivory blocks were again sawed into slices or plates, as they were called. The plates were put into a leather-cased wooden block held in the left hand, while the roughness left by the sawing was removed by a sharp knife or "scraper."

The tooth cutting was done by fastening the ivory plate into a small, vice-like machine, and the cutting accomplished by a movable saw.

The polishing and cleansing the interstices or brushing was done by machinery, but the "setting" or straightening the teeth, which were apt to be crooked after the sawing, was done by a small steel tool in the hands of an expert, who thus straightened even the finest teeth one by one.

The finished combs, of varied degrees of fineness, were of substantial thickness, for at this early period ivory was comparativeiy cheap, and the life of the material was not then kiln-dried and bleached out of it.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE "SABBA'-DAY" HOUSE.

SOME years before the turnpike road between New York and Boston brought in a new era. A Congregational meeting house had been built on the spot where the Center church now stands. Larger than the first one on "Meeting House Hill" (for this was the name of the hill until sometime in the thirties), it was very likely a better built house, but almost equally as bare of interior comfort.

An ancient lady born in 1779, from whose lips most of these reminiscent odds and ends were taken, perfectly well remembered the old "Sabba'-day" house that stood just south of the church. Part of the foundation and cellar wall were there as late as 1838. This "Sabba'-day" house was a sort of joint stock concern owned by some of the church members who lived too far from the church to go home and return within the hour-long (or short) noon intermission.

The one room had a fireplace, and the fuel and a barrel of cider were provided by "joining."

It must have taken some constancy of purpose to leave the warm fireside for the frigid atmosphere of the meeting house from the present point of view. It seems likely enough that a sense of duty might compel some of the party to stay and see the fire properly taken care of.

This property (the land) was owned by the Rev. Mr. Hall. It was afterwards bought by John Butler, and

his son, Lyman Butler, built a house very nearly where the old "Sabba'-day" house stood.

This house (in 1899) is owned and occupied by Mrs. Lyman Butler and her daughters. Here also was, and is still, a well of delicious water flowing from a spring never known yet to run dry. This spring supplies the house, and also furnishes the adjacent factories of Chas. Parker with drinking water.

In this second church there were no more means for warmth than there had been in the first one. The seats could not have been much better than mere benches, for it was told of an elderly woman, now living, that when a restless child she slipped from the seat and made her way under the benches, on all fours, to the door, till finally she was captured by her dismayed pursuers on the last step.

Something there must have been in the hearts and minds of those brethren and sisters of that former time differing from ours, this later day, to sit as they did, Sunday after Sunday, in the carpetless, cushionless, fireless, comfortless room, and listen devoutly through the hour of the long prayer which the minister might not curtail, to the singing keyed from the pitch pipe of the two or three tunes which were never changed from one year's end to another. And then to the hour-long sermon, which might not be shortened, although it might be, and often was lengthened.

There is something pathetic in the thought of those hard-working men and women sitting patiently, hour after hour, on the hard benches, looking intently up to the high pulpit, trying to obtain some spiritual rest and refreshment, while from that altitude the "doctrines" were expounded. Predestination, foreordination and election were argued over and over to the

confusion and utter bewilderment of the hearers, and one suspects, maybe, of the preacher also.

The merciful love, the everlasting patience of the Divine Fatherhood had no place in that austere system of opinions.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ANECDOTE OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY 1791 the turnpike road from Boston to New York had been projected, disputed, quarreled over and built.

The completed work was held to be a most wonderful achievement, quite as great for that time as its successful rival, the railroad, fifty years later.

From Hartford to New Haven the old turnpike runs almost directly north and south. The contractor, one Mr. Peck of New Haven, affirmed his determination to make a straight road between the two cities if (as he profanely declared) it took him through *hell*.

Wherever the low, swampy ground required filling in willows were planted thickly by the roadside. Where the grade of the road was raised and the ground dry, Lombardy poplars were planted equally thick.

The turnpike stock was eagerly taken, and was valuable for many years. The elder Dr. Hough invested largely in it, and the earnings made a fair income for many years for those of his family who inherited it. After the railroad was built it became valueless. No modern failure of stocks has brought with it more consternation than did that turnpike stock failure bring to one family when it was decided that it must be entirely thrown away or sold for a few cents a share.

But that came to pass later. I am a little premature. Before the growth of the town had begun, while yet all citizens, except the minister, doctor and the store-keeper, were scattered on isolated farms, there was not

wanting what at this distance of time seems like romantic incident, but probably most commonplace enough to those most nearly concerned.

Deacon Ezekiel Rice would often tell, his aged eyes filling with tears, at the recollection of seeing, when peace was declared after the Revolution, the women running from house to house waving their aprons and crying for joy. For life had been hard for them in those years of trying to be a nation and to have a country.

On the other hand, an ancient maiden lady used to get rampantly indignant while rehearsing to her partly scared, partly amused and partly sympathizing listener the story of how her "honored father" was not allowed to pass the limits of his own farm in the western part of the town, he being a rabid Tory and thus liable to be shot.

A story told of at least one other town in New England was certainly told the writer, of a family who lived at the eastern side of Meriden, how the summons for joining the army having come suddenly, suitable clothing had to be provided, and that at once, only having twenty-four hours to do it all. So they sheared a white sheep and a black one, mixed the wool, carded it, spun it and wove it, and then made the mixed black and white into a suit of clothes, which the soldier wore when he left home. The women sat up all night to do it. This story has been told of more than one New England family, and was doubtless true of more than one, for the daughters of Eve are resourceful.

Another local story belonging to the days of the Revolution could never at least in after years be impartially judged.

A Meriden man, a Tory, carried his principles so far that he went to Canada and joined the British army.

While absent from Meriden he married an English woman of good family, a daughter of an English officer. When the war was over he came home. While on the way two infant daughters were born. His wife the mother of one, the elder, by a few days, a servant girl the mother of the younger; the man the father of both. The penalty of such a crime, if proved, was then of extreme rigor; even death in extreme cases, and this one, taken up as it was by the thinly scattered but severely moral public, was considered a most heinous affair.

Arrest and a trial followed. Then the woman and wife arose, and having, as she afterwards said, "taken gunpowder and rum to give her courage," she took oath that both babes were "bone of her bone," and "flesh of her flesh," justifying her act by saying that she and her husband were one. The same woman insisted that all her new-born children should be immediately plunged into cold water. The wife of Dr. Hough, when told of this, observed that "Mrs. —— ought to be put into a tub of cold water herself." This remark was never forgiven by Mrs. —— as long as she lived. She used to wither by its repetition an unlucky great-granddaughter of Mrs. Hough whenever an opportunity was given.

The two sisters, while young, were called twins, but after the death of the wife and mother this was repudiated by the elder. The two lived to be very old. The elder died at home, but the younger, who outlived all the family, died at last at a great age at the town farm. The forsaken body rested for one night in St. Andrew's church, and thence was borne to its nameless grave, thus ending a story that began more than a hundred years ago.

## CHAPTER V.

### SOME OF THE OLDER FAMILIES.

UNTIL about 1785 the real center of the town was the corner of Curtis and Ann streets. On the spot now known as Ann street stood a low, rambling red house. A tragic interest was connected with the place, for in it a little boy had shot and killed his sister. She was buried in the old Broad street cemetery, and it is said this was the first burial there. Nothing more than this is known of the family.

Dr. Ensign Hough lived in this house for many years, and here all his children were born. His sister, Mindwell, married Daniel Curtis and settled in a dwelling house that stood east of the Edwin Curtis property on Curtis street. She was the great-grandmother of the family of Curtis, so long and honorably identified with the public interests of Meriden.

The first tavern in Meriden was, of course, the historical and somewhat mythical "Belcher Tavern." But the first one in the center of the town was the old house removed, as told before, to make room for the residence of Edward Miller.

The first store, it will be remembered, was also in an addition to this dwelling house or tavern. This was before the turnpike was laid out. Travelers came into or left town by the old Colony road, or by what is now Curtis street or by Wall street, then known as the Westfield road. When the turnpike was finished, and the stage route between Boston and New York fairly opened up, Meriden began to look up in the world and

to see the need of providing for the traveling public. The following scanty chronicles were gathered in the talks with Mrs. Sally Bradley, the daughter of the first Dr. Hough and the sister of the second.

Mrs. Bradley was born July 11, 1779. She said her father moved into and opened what is now spoken of as the old tavern "just before she was twelve years old." This, of course, fixes the date as 1791. The location once occupied by this old inn is almost exactly half way between the old state buildings in the two capitals, Hartford and New Haven. There used to be a mile stone just about opposite Olive street on the east side of Broad with "XVII. miles to New Haven" upon it. Another one stood just north of the Odd Fellows' building on Broad street with "XVII. miles to Hartford" upon it. It used also to be said that the house stood only twenty miles farther from the state house in Boston than from the city hall in New York. Probably, however, this only meant from the terminus of the stage route in either city. The tavern was famous along the whole line.

The two Dr. Houghs, father and son, were men of education. A library, and not a small one, was a feature in the house. A good farm belonged to the place. The great barns north of the house were ample in their room for animals, and the yards swarmed with all sorts of poultry. The great garden was laid out in terraces, that descended nearly to Center street. Apples and pears, the earliest to ripen, as well as the latest, were abundant. Great cherry trees grew close to the house, and peach trees, gooseberry and currant bushes edged the terraces. Even in 1835, when the writer's memory of the place begins, this garden and orchard were in the spring a mass that, to the eye, seemed almost dense of

glowing color, and on fair, dewy mornings the vicinity was almost heavy with the fragrance. At the present time (1899) one old pear tree still remains at the northwest corner of the present dwelling house. An ice house was also an adjunct. Most of the large farms could boast of a "spring house," but an ice house then was a rarity anywhere. This one was the only one in town. It was simply an outdoor cellar at the northwest corner of the house, surmounted by a four-sided, pointed roof, with a ball at the apex, as it remained in the memory of the writer.

A young nephew of the younger Dr. Hough selected this ice house as a hiding-place when it was only partially filled. Somehow he slipped and fell. He was found with his back broken, and only lived a few hours. Mrs. Bradley said that the front of the house was a green yard, with a row of Lombardy poplars. These trees were for some unaccountable reason at that period great favorites. A few specimens are still to be seen along the old turnpike road through the country. They are tall, ungainly trees, and in their old age almost destitute of foliage. Mrs. Bradley said these trees were soon removed, being in the way, as their manner of growth is totally unfitted for shade, and, besides, not being in the least ornamental.

The interior of the house was the common and convenient one of the period. A wide front door opened into a square hall, from which ascended a narrow, crooked stairway. On either side doors opened into spacious rooms, each with its fireplace. From each room a door gave access to the great kitchen, in which the whole space between these doors was taken up by the vast fireplace and the capacious brick ovens. A bedroom opened off each end of the long kitchen.

Each of these bedrooms had also a fireplace and mantel. An addition contained the pantry and dairy. In the second story a wide hall ran through the house. At one end it opened by a half glass door upon a balcony that ran across the front of the house over the front door. Into this long hall all the chambers opened. Each of these chambers also had its fireplace. In each and all of these rooms, both upstairs and down, fires were kept during the cold months. Wood was plenty, and there seems to have been no lack of help about the place, outside or in. In the kitchen the helpers were the farmers' daughters of the town, who were glad thus to vary the monotony of their home life.

One of these girls professed herself "ashamed" of Mrs. Hough's flaky pie crust. "It broke to pieces," so she said. "Her mother's," she remarked, "did not break a bit when it was cut." One of the girls became the victim of a strange disease. Her joints enlarged until they almost reversed their normal position. She lived almost ninety years, and was cared for and supported by members of Dr. Hough's family until her death.

One of the men employed was an oddity, who never would hurry no matter what happened, but who "accomplished as much as anybody and more than some." "If he came into the house he brought an armful of wood; if he went out he took something that ought to be carried out." He was wont to say that "he never hurried but once, and then he did not get anything for it." He ran some distance down the road with a pair of gloves left by a stage passenger, who did not even thank him.

Another noted character in the family was a colored boy named Prince Duplex. He always asserted himself

to be a son of an African king. Of his record any man might be proud. It was said of him in the four years of his stay he never told or even acted a falsehood. He was diligent, thoughtful and always respectful. "He was rightly named Prince; his character was noble." He went to New Haven, married, and was for a great many years sexton in one of the churches. He died at an advanced age. If any of his descendants are living they may well be proud of their ancestor.

A contrast to Prince was a black imp named Fred Cable. Fred went into convulsions of snickering when Dr. Cogswell of New Haven, who was blind, being helped from the stage by Fred, asked him "if he was Dr. Hough's son." Dr. Isaac Hough was a bachelor.

Another hanger-on was an old colored party who bore the classic name of Priam. He lived "over east," but did odd jobs about the tavern. An enormous porker, when killed and dressed, was found to be what is called "measly," and therefore considered unfit for use. Undaunted, Priam said he "wasn't afraid of nothin'," begged the carcass, carried it home, and he and his numerous progeny flourished mightily thereon.

The east front room of the tavern was the bar room, and was also the post office. The mail brought by the stages was spread out for inspection upon a table set apart for the purpose, and afterward placed in a rack affixed to the wall. As in most New England hostleries, the bar-room was the village club room, the social center of the men of the town; the place where politics, local and national, were discussed; where theological points were argued, and where party spirit ran high, in due proportion to the depth of party ignorance.

The costumes of the two doctors, father and son, were thus described by Mrs. Bradley. They wore knee

breeches and long stockings, with buckles at the knee. The elder man wore his hair long, combed back from his forehead and braided in a queue, tied with black ribbon. Both wore frilled shirt bosoms, and at the wrists ruffles of fine lawn made and done up by the daughters of the house. Clear starching was then considered an art and taught as such. The ruffles, when starched and ironed, were laid in tiny pleats, each carefully laid down and creased by the thumb nail. The strain on the hands often caused a serious affection of the tendons at the wrist. The younger doctor, Dr. Isaac Ira Hough, wore this costume long after it was discarded by other gentlemen. He used to say he was sorry he ever left it off. He was an enormously large man, but had small, delicate hands and very small feet. He was exceedingly autocratic in his manner and conversation, and considered himself, and was generally conceded to be an authority in most of the world's doings, from national affairs to washing dishes.

The drinking or tippling habit was universal. The supplies for the bar were kept in the spacious cellars. One great barrel was always kept filled with New England rum and wild cherries. Once it became necessary to renew the cherries, and the refuse was thrown into the barn yard. The multifarious live stock partook greedily, and the result was literally too comical for words. All of the barn yard denizens were very drunk. "Most of the fowls lay upon their backs, and the pigs could not walk straight. An old sow lay and squealed."

By 1820 travel had greatly increased. Eight stages stopped every twenty-four hours at the tavern. About that year a ball-room was added to the house. This ball-room was a counterpart of most country ball-rooms of the period, the ceiling being somewhat arched, with

a low platform at the upper end. A bench ran around the room against the wall. This ball-room was opened by a wedding. Hubbard Merriam and his wife were married in it. The bride at the time was a member of the Hough family. For a good many years it was the scene of the local courts and auctions, now and then a church fair or a concert took place there.

To the old tavern came at one time or another nearly all the notable people of the first forty years of the century. Wadsworth, of Hartford Athenaeum fame, was often there; also Hillhouse, whose name will live while the New Haven elms flourish. "Squire Hillhouse always called for baked beans," and sensible man that he was, insisted on eating them in the warm kitchen. "Professor Silliman of Yale College was there a great deal." The poet, Percival, also frequented the house. "He would order his dinner, then take a book, and forgetting all about his food, would read for two hours, standing all the time." Edmund Kean and Chas. Kemble stopped there when driving from New York to Boston with a private carriage and a pair of horses.

The writer well remembers standing on the balcony and looking down as President Andrew Jackson stood up in a barouche at the southeast corner of the building. He was bareheaded, and held a soft felt hat in his hand. His hair stood up straight, as it is seen in his pictures. General Walter Booth introduced him as the "Hero of New Orleans," which to a young listener sounded thrillingly fine as the crowd cheered in response.

It might be noted here that at that time all the citizens of Meriden put together would not make much of a crowd.

General Jackson looked grim and bored. He finally,

after bowing low, sat down and the carriage bore him away to the northward, President Martin Van Buren was once at the house. Tom Marshall of Kentucky stopped here once. He spoke in Meriden, and was a disappointment in that he had none of his accustomed wit and humor. He was intensely dry and serious. Henry Clay and Commodore Macdonough were also transient guests there. Abraham Lincoln and Horace Greeley have trod its threshold and looked across the valley below over to the unchanged mountains.

An incident of the early twenties would in these days perhaps be called a "faith cure." Mrs. Bradley was in her brother's time the hostess. When only thirty years of age she was prostrated by paralysis. A traveler, a woman, was told, as an excuse for some omission in the service, that the mistress of the house was ill. She was much interested and very earnest to see the invalid.

"My case was thought to be hopeless," said Mrs. Bradley, "and I had lost all courage. The stranger sat down by my bed and told me she had suffered in the same way. She explained to me the method of her recovery, and then she went on her own way. I never knew her name, or whence she came, or whither she went, but she gave me hope and inspired me with resolution to get well. I have lived a long life since then, and I hope not quite a useless one."

Mrs. Bradley lived eighty-five years with undimmed faculties. Perhaps in some fair country she has met the stranger whose words "fitly spoken" extended to and influenced another and younger generation. Mrs. Bradley is buried in the Broad Street Cemetery. A brown stone monument near the entrance marks the resting place of the Hough family.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE OLD SCHOOL DAYS.

So late as 1850 there stood on the slope between Gale avenue and Holt Hill bridge a little, low red hut with four small windows. So the writer was told by two old ladies who went to school there in their childhood. This was the first school-house in Meriden. It stood at first near Ann street, but was moved. The old ladies were certain about it, for they both went to school there in the seventies and eighties.

"It had a fireplace and the chimney was built outside."

Another one just as red and just as small was built a few years after on the "old road," now Colony street. Mrs. Jeanette Clark, the sister of the late George R. Curtis, went to school there more than eighty years ago. The second one had also a fireplace, for the alternate freezing and roasting process which the scholars underwent during the cold weather.

"We learned our alphabet," said one of the aforesaid old ladies, and when we came Z we were taught to call it izzard."

"What sense was there in that?" was asked.

"I am sure I don't know," was the answer; "but so we were taught."

On Saturdays the Shorter Catechism was studied, and, perhaps, sometime learned. Also, sometimes, the Commandments; but it appears these were considered less important than the Catechism. The "Primer" for the younger children and the New Testament for the elder were the school reading books in the seventies.

The first edition of this primer was strictly religious in its axioms. Thus: "In Adam's fall we sinned all." The woodcut was of an apple tree, beneath which were two figures having a remote likeness to humanity, one of them offering the other a big apple.

" Young Obadiah,  
David, Josias,  
All were pious."

This was illustrated by three bare-legged boys in kilt shirts.

" Zaccheus, he,  
Did climb a tree,  
His Lord to see."

Zaccheus and his tree were not exactly in proportion to each other, but that, no doubt, was owing to limited space.

" Proud Korah's troop  
Was swallowed up."

" Time cuts down all,  
Both great and small."

His scythe perilously near the heels of two fleeing boys of different sizes.

" Youth forward slips,  
Death soonest nips."

A youth in kilts and a skeleton were apparently having what in these degenerate and irreverent days could be called a "spirit." After awhile a more secular primer was published. The couplets in this new primer ran thus:

" The cat doth play  
And, after, slay."

" The dog doth bite  
The thief at night."

This was intended as a burlesque on the original, but was not nearly as funny, and, needless to say, was not used as a school text book.

By 1820 several school-houses had been built. A substantial one in the western part of the town was known as the Stone School-house. It is still standing, but for several years has been used as a dwelling house. At this time (1825) there were well established boarding schools in Hartford and New Haven for young ladies. I believe the Lancasterian school for boys in New Haven was also then established. The Cheshire Academy was then of repute, and until in the forties this was a mixed school. Its single two-story brick school building was considered rather an imposing edifice. In many of the small towns in the state there were barn-like structures called academies. The chief distinction between these and the common school-houses was that the former were two stories in height and the latter only one. Also, in the interior, the difference consisted by having the seats arranged in rows with aisles between, each seat arranged for two scholars. Only the upper story was used by the school. The lower room, always a bare, comfortless place, was rented for itinerant preachings, or often for a winter singing school.

"Why were the children compelled to go up stairs?"

"I cannot tell; but so it was."

As for the studies pursued at these academies, the feeblest of our modern graded schools would compare favorably with the best. It is quite possible that until the end of time each growing up generation will be told by the grown-ups how greatly superior are the advantages they have now enjoyed over those of their own unappreciative youth. One is sometimes half inclined

to suspect that the advantages of the day and the hour are quite as many as the young students can manage with advantage.

Long before 1833 the school districts in town had been set off and school-houses provided. These were so exactly alike, both outside and inside, that a sketch of any one of them would answer for any of the others. The dimensions were probably twenty by twenty-five feet; certainly not more, and perhaps not as much as that.

In 1832 the center of the town had grown so populous that a quarrel ensued as to the location of the Center school. A compromise was made by a division into the north center and south center. The south center hired, or bought, a small workshop in a lane that is now the part of Charles street, between Broad and High streets; so close to the northwest corner of the Broad street cemetery that the side of the school-house formed part of the boundary.

It is, however, with the north center school, in the winter of 1834, that the writer had the most intimate acquaintance. This was her first introduction to a district school, and also within her memory to a northern winter. The school-house stood nearly at the present junction of Wall and North Broad streets. A large butternut tree grew at the northwest corner of the building. Beneath this tree was the wood pile of logs to be cut for fuel as wanted. This was by no means as often as needed for warmth and comfort. Before the two doors, which gave entrance to the house, lay flat stones, which served as door steps. These might have been taken from the nearest stone wall. The open space around the house was bare of turf, and was worn into hollows. The paths which led directly to the doors

were simply gutters filled with mud or dust, according to the weather. The doors gave access to two lobbies, where four or five children could stand at once if they stood close. The south door was the boys' entrance; the north door the girls. In the lobbies or entries, as we called them, were kept the outer garments, the dinner pails and other possessions of the scholars.

There was not a rubber shoe in America, or anywhere else for that matter, and wet feet remained so until they had time to dry. In the middle of the room a raised hearth or platform, about three feet square, made of brick and the thickness of a brick in height, supported a box stove. The room had four windows, two on a side. Around the room on three sides was a sloping counter which served as a desk, on which was kept, in more or less orderly fashion, the books and slates of the larger scholars. In front of this counter, on three sides, was a bench made of slabs, the flat side being uppermost. These benches were an elongated and exaggerated counterpart of the wash-bench in common use before the era of city water and set tubs. In front of these were low seats, with an apology for a back. On these the younger scholars and the very little ones were seated, and wore out six hours out of every five or six days of their innocent lives. Oftener than not three dollars a week for a man teacher and one dollar and a half for a woman, for six days teaching, was thought "pretty easy."

That they might give the district the worth of its money, they were required to teach the half of each Saturday, or the whole of each alternate one. The windows were shadeless; neither blind nor curtain tempered the glare. They were never washed, unless in summer some young woman teacher, unable to stand

their grimness, essayed, with the help of the girls, a little housecleaning on her own account. The room was swept once a week by the girls in turn. The boys would have considered they had lost caste by doing anything so feminine.

An acceptable candidate for the winter school must be able to teach reading, writing (for this last he must "set copies") and Daboll's arithmetic, so far as or including the rule of three; to make a quill pen, and to "govern" the large boys. He would, no doubt, have been expected to make the fire, but as he "boarded round," it would often happen that his temporary residence was a mile or two from the school-house, so the fire was built by some one living in the vicinity.

At nine in the morning those who loitered outside were called in by a vigorous thumping on the window sash with a ruler or ferule. This instrument was utilized as a timekeeper, to line copy books and as a means of castigation, whenever energetic disciplinary measures were in order. The pupils rushed in with all the racket and clatter that vigorous youth, shod in heavy, cowhide boots and shoes, are capable of creating. The boys who entered later perpetrated a curious side long jerk of the head, and the girls a quick perpendicular dip of the person, both contortions being supposed to indicate "manners." When fairly seated Testaments were produced and school opened by the first and second classes reading two verses as it came the turn of each scholar.

But, oh, such reading, such mumbling, stammering sounds! Such nasal, twanging voices! An ambitious youth would pitch his voice to a high falsetto that could be heard a quarter of a mile. The next one would be inaudible half across the room. It was positively

dreadful to hear sacred words rattled off in such an unmeaning and irreverent fashion.

The reading over, all the large scholars turned their faces to the wall and addressed themselves to Daboll's arithmetic, Woodbridge's geography or their home-made writing books. Of course, the boys could turn on the long benches easily enough, but the girls had to take pains to perform the gymnastic feat properly. It was done by stooping and placing the hands on each side of the skirts, then by a quick, circular movement throwing the feet over the bench. This was usually done simultaneously. When called upon for anything by the teacher the whole class whirled back again.

At this juncture the teacher was exhilarated by the sight of a three-sided row of uncouth shoulders, rounded backs and swinging feet and ankles, for only the tallest pupils could touch, even while sitting, the floor with their feet.

Webster's New Speller was the class book for spelling in the school. The revised edition of this spelling book, issued in 1880, differs from the edition used in the early thirties, and that differed somewhat from the first one issued. It was a thin volume bound in blue boards, and had a frontispiece depicting a very tall woman, who looked as though she had gotten out of bed on the wrong side and had draped herself with the blankets. She directed the attention of a scantily clad youth to an overgrown parrot cage labeled "Fame" perched on the apex of a boulder. There was no apparent reason in particular why she should not take it down and hand it to him.

The third class having had their spelling lesson in words of two syllables set for them to study, the little ones were called up one by one to be taught their

"A, B, C's." The unlucky infants were kept to their duty by raps on the head with the handle of a pen knife used as a pointer, and always kept in readiness for the exigencies of pen mending. The raps were never severe. They only emphasized such remarks as, "Look on the book, not at me!" "Look sharp at this letter!" etc. A dozen or two of mere babies were thus tagged one another along down the row of twenty-six letters. Such requests as "Please to g' wout to get 'er drink er water!" (as though there were a choice of drinks), and "Please to mend my pen!" The statement that "they are a crowdin' on me," and an occasional howl from some over-tired little mortal on the little bench in front, gave variety to the exercises.

It would now be time for the second class to read and spell. A whirl of feet and petticoats landed two rows of boys and girls standing on the floor facing the teacher, who gave the order, "Manners!" and the jerking of necks and bobbing of skirts gave evidence that school etiquette was understood. The spelling came first, afterward the reading from the same page. Here are a few specimens:

"We burn oil in tin and glass lamps."

"We can burn fish oil in lamps."

"Watts was a very good poet. He wrote good songs."

A geography lesson, if anybody had one, mending pens, attending to "sums," and a "playtime" for the boys and one for the girls brought the morning session to a close. This "recess," as it was called by the older girls, was announced thus: "Boys may go out." This was a signal for a rush. The expiration of their time was notified by the rapping of the ruler on the window sash, accompanied by, "Girls may go out."

This particular winter the boys would wait until the girls came out, and then intercept them and in various ways annoy them. The feminine spirit was aroused by this treatment, and the girls refused to stir until the obnoxious boys were safe in the school-house. The afternoon began by reading in the "Columbian Orator." The "National Preceptor" came into use a few years later. To some of the scholars this was the best part of the day. More Daboll, a geography lesson and more alphabet for the little ones.

Poor little things! They sat patiently three hours on the hard benches, with nothing to do and nothing pleasant to look at. The one virtue required of them was to keep still. More spelling by the first and second classes, and at one o'clock the school day's work was done. "Manners" were required from each scholar on leaving the room, and the genuflection was aimed at the wall, the benches, the door or the teacher as it happened. The summer school was always taught by a woman. The routine differed something from that of the winter. Instead of "manners" she gave as the order "obeisance" as a more elegant word. The rule of three was considered too obtruse for the feminine intellect, and was therefore omitted. The summer school was depended on for the A, B, C teaching. Low be it spoken, but somehow the masculine powers did not seem adequate to this preliminary lifting of the little feet upon the ladder of learning.

The teacher of the summer school was also expected to teach plain sewing. She had to superintend the stitches put into certain squares of printed calico, which the housemother or a deputy had basted together. These were eventually made into bed quilts to be exhibited as the little maiden's own work, with an

embroidery of facts not quite unheard of in the later days of floss silk and filoselle. The knitting of yarn stockings, also, had to be looked over and kept in order by the teacher. The vexations of lost knitting needles and dropped stitches, tangled yarn, soiled thread, puckered seams and long stitches were unremitting.

In that bleak winter of 1834 two little maids met for the first time. Both were at odds with their surroundings and each found the other sympathetic. The friendship begun then lasted for half a century unbroken by any misunderstanding or by one hasty or unkind word, until, with the once brown locks silvered, but with the smile of her girlhood upon her lips and in her eyes, one went away to abide forever in the country of eternal peace, for which she was so well prepared.

In those early years the fitness of the teacher of the winter school was gauged by his capacity for what was called "government." This meant his ability to "master the big boys." There was no real discipline. It seemed to be a matter of brute force or, one should say, muscular efficiency. There were no rewards for good conduct, although punishments were common. I do not think the teacher of this particular school was especially cruel. He used the ferule severely and often. The writer remembers one boy who was made to stand in the center of the room and to touch the toe of his shoe with his forefinger, and to retain that position so long that he was ill in consequence.

One little girl, for some misdemeanor, was ordered to go and sit next to a colored boy. As the culprit had just come from South Carolina and had seen more negroes than she had white people, she saw no humiliation in the order, and she could not understand why her indifference caused her further punishment. That

winter some of the older boys rebelled at the teacher's severity, and by way of retaliation put live coals into the shoes he had left in the room at noon. He was, of course, very angry, but the guilty ones kept their secret well. With his best efforts he never found out who did it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FIRST PRIVATE SCHOOL.

The first private school in town was taught by an Episcopal clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Keeler. The private school teachers who succeeded him, a Miss Booth, Miss Julianne Eddy and Miss Henrietta Malone, were his scholars.

In the summer of 1834 Miss Eddy began a private school in the basement of the Center Congregational church. This room, now much enlarged, with lecture room, parlor, kitchen and all other necessary conveniences, was then one large, dark gloomy room filled with benches.

Miss Eddy's scholars had their desks in the southeast corner, but they themselves sat about the room pretty much as they pleased. The windows, six in number, were high from the floor, and had deep seats formed by the thick walls. In these window seats the larger girls were fond of sitting to study their lessons. Their principal text books were "Watts on the Mind" and Comstock's "Dialogues" on Chemistry and Philosophy. The younger scholars were supposed to study Smith's Grammar and Olney's Geography.

The author of the latter lived in Southington. He was said to be a very unpractical person. Having engaged some one to kill a pig, he was told to have everything in readiness very early in the morning. To be sure and be in season, he boiled the water for scalding his porkship over night. His geography, though, was an excellent one, and remained in general use for a great many years.

The only bit of geographical information that survives is that of the animals of British America: "Moose, Otters, Bears, Beavers, Martens, Foxes, Hares."

We were not hurt by over study, and we had a good time. A small house now removed stood next west and close to the church. It was known as the Tibbals place. It stood several feet above the level of the road, and was surrounded by great clusters of the cinnamon and old fashioned cabbage roses, and was shaded by pear trees and the always present cherry trees. The front door was protected by an overhanging porch supported by pillars, having seats on each side. Here the daily recesses and the noon hour were always spent in good weather. Comfortably settled on the seats the older girls would send their satellites and generally obedient slaves, the younger girls, into the lane for green apples, following diligently the ripening of the fruit until the last pumpkin-sweet and fall pippin had fallen from the trees.

This lane was lovely. On the east side of it a bank, surmounted by a board fence, separated it from the tavern garden with its abundant fruit trees. On the west a low stone wall ran close to a row of apple trees, from which we drew our supplies. These trees had been ingeniously grafted so as to be always fruitful. This lane gave access to the bare open fields, bounded on the north by Liberty street. The soil of these fields was considered to be so cold and wet as to be unfit for cultivation, and although almost every kind of wild flower grew there, and huckleberries, raspberries and blackberries were in profusion, we kept out of the fields, for there were traditions of snakes having been met with there, and reptiles of phenomenal size and venom.

The lane could be entered from one side by a set of bars, but as a means of ingress these were ignored. Our usual method was to start from the house on a run and to go over the wall with a bound and a jump, returning with aprons and dress skirts laden with apples. The dear woman who lived in the house used to lament and wonder and sigh and hope as she three times each day swept the debris from her front door-steps.

But in spite of green apple eating and unlimited romping and racing, we remained a very healthy, happy set of children, even if our books did not trouble us very much. Once in a while we were all in earnest. "Comstock" mentioned the Camera Obscura. Straight-way experiments were in order. Shawls, capes, aprons and sun bonnets were pressed into service for darkening the windows. These were arranged to leave an aperture for the admission of tiny ray of light. Everything adjusted, the obsequious younger girls were sent out to promenade back and forth before the window. If the ray fell properly the moving figures would be seen upon the wall much diminished and in an inverted position. This experiment nearly outrivaled green apple devouring.

One day Frances Holt, who was usually the instigator of our escapades, one or two others following a very close second, told us if we looked into the well "we could see stars in the daytime." This was sufficient. We at once hung ourselves over the well curb. Of course we saw no stars, but Mary Foster dropped her new fashioned, much beruffled, pink gingham sun-bonnet into the well and was only kept from going after it by the united strength of the company tugging at her skirts. The hubbub and screaming nearly threw the

long-suffering inmate of the dwelling into a fit of nervous prostration, though that was not the name for it then.

The next winter the school was moved into a room more easily warmed in the basement of the old Baptist church on the northeast corner of the Broad street cemetery. Owing to the rise of the ground the most westerly of the two rooms was the higher. This was much smaller than the one used for conference and prayer meetings. The smaller of these rooms was the school-room.

In course of the winter the older girls took a new departure and gave an entertainment with recitations and dialogues. There was no music of any kind. There was then only one piano in town, and although some of the girls had fine voices, not one of them could have been persuaded to sing in public out of a choir. The school-room was utilized as the dressing-room, and the stage was made by laying boards across some benches before the door, connecting it with the conference room, that in this instance was the auditorium. The curtains were sheets with strings run in the hems.

Miss Eddy managed the scene-shifting herself, stepping daintily in her slippers, tied with cross ribbons, to the edge of the stage, drawing the curtain first from one side and then from the other. The scene between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle was given with great *eclat*. The young lady who took the part of Sir Peter wore a coat and collar and stock borrowed from a young gentleman. Such donning of manish garments was thought to verge on impropriety, but on the whole it was much enjoyed. So very well was the affair received that the young men in the town at once started an "Elocution Society," in which all the prominent young men took an interest.

After a year or two the elderly men became interested and took part actively in the speaking and debating. The name was changed to the "Debating Society," and soon after to the "Lyceum." The school remained in the basement of the church, as the location was a convenient one. The next summer it was further distinguished by lesson in theorem flower painting and also beadwork. Some specimens of both are still in existence. Calisthenics were also taught and practiced. This exercise Frances Holt confided to her especial affinities as "pious dancing."

It was in this summer that half a dozen of the little girls had a play-place under a large and very beautiful tree that grew at just the present junction of Olive and High streets. Here they spent most of their noon hours in good weather. One day they found to their dismay they were "awful late." Passing in full view of those within the school-room, they alighted like a row of disconsolate pigeons on the lowest of the high flight of steps that led to the church door. Here they held a consultation. It would never do to go home at that hour that was certain, and they did not feel like playing any more just then. The position was very serious.

Finally one of them, whose meaning was often better than her method of expressing it, said "she did not care for Miss Eddy; she was going in." As all the young sinners needed was a leader, the little troop filed into the schoolroom.

No sooner were they fairly seated and Miss Eddy sternly regarding them, than one daughter of Adam, who, whether he was the first man or not, is the first tell-tale on record, took it upon herself to say that Frances B—— said "she did not care for Miss Eddy."

"Did you say that?" demanded the lady.

"Yes, ma'am; but I did not mean I did not care for you."

"Take your place in that little chair in the center of the room."

Then Miss Esther Gray spoke and gave her opinion that Frances H—— deserved punishment quite as much as Frances B—— did, for had it not been for the latter not one of them would have been in school that afternoon.

Miss Eddy considered for a moment and then sent Frances B—— to her seat. The two F——s were "mad as fire" at each other for half an hour or so, and then "made up." Not long after this summer Miss Eddy married and went to live in one of the southern states. Except for a visit she never returned north.

After Miss Eddy's marriage Miss Henrietta Malone opened a private school in what was known as Capt. Collins' "old house," in contradistinction to Capt. Collins' "new house."

From first to last this was an ideal school. Most of the children sat in their own little chairs brought from home. A table held our extra book. Upon rainy days it was drawn into the middle of the room and we sat around it while we ate our noon lunch. In one corner of the room was a "beaufet" cupboard, with curiously shaped shelves and paneled doors.

In the other corner was a closet which held our outdoor things. The fireplace and mantel were between the two. Two south windows and a north window gave the room plenty of light and sunshine. Lilacs and rose bushes clustered close to the door and windows, and apple, pear, plum and cherry trees grew all about the great old-fashioned house. The house itself has

been gone for many a year, but Mr. Aaron L. Collins has an excellent sketch of it. Miss Malone was extremely particular in her methods.

When the grass was high on the wide lawn that fronted the house we were at our recess made to walk two by two down the path and to a certain distance outside the gate, and we came back in the same order. When the daily session was over we left the premises in the same way. When the mowing had been done and the grass we marched around the lawn, and our diversions were more varied, but were still sedate.

Under Miss Malone's tutelage we were not injured by study. Indeed, one cannot remember we learned anything except to behave well and express ourselves properly.

A small scholar, who is a grandfather now, announced that "the sun has come out."

"My dear," said Miss Malone, "the sun shines."

The lad corrected himself a little.

"Ah, that is better."

A young gentleman, whose home was contiguous and found the daily parade very entertaining, one day varied the performance by saying, "How do you do?" every time the phalanx came aronnd. Finally one of the children replied:

"None the better for seeing you."

This being duly reported Miss Malone set before us all the extreme rudeness and incivility of such a reply, finishing the lecture by saying the answer should have been:

"Very well, I thank you."

At this Frances Holt, who always improved her opportunities, put on an air of injured virtue and remarked:

"Why, Miss Malone, suppose we wasn't well; it would be telling a lie."

Miss Malone's reproving "My dear" closed the subject.

The marriage of Miss Malone to Henry Curtis closed this school. She became blind and bedridden before her death. One of her most tiresome old pupils, who had herself seen many vicissitudes, was glad to help a little to relieve the monotony of that darkened life. It gave one a curious sensation to hear again, after the long years, the once familiar, "F——, you are reading too fast." The blind woman could not realize that her whilom provoking pupil was a gray haired grandmother.

Previous to 1835 all the children who did not belong to the "Old Road" district went to the stone school-house over west. There was no school-house between. In that year a district was set off at the Corner and a school was opened in a tiny building that had been used for some mechanical purposes, and stood just where the Main street railroad crossing now is.

A part of the room, which could not have been more than twelve feet square, was taken up by a sort of oven or furnace of brick, which had been made for some experimental project. This room was used for two or three years.

Meanwhile the Meriden Lyceum had grown, aided by such men as Judge James Brooks, Major E. A. Cowles, and Gen. Walter Booth, into an institution very creditable to the town. In the year 1838 it was found that a suitable building was needed for its accommodation. A piece of ground was bought and a two-story structure was put up of only two rooms—one above and one below. The upper one was reached by outside stairs,

and was for the exclusive use of the Lyceum. The Corner school was moved into the lower room.

This was the beginning of the present Corner school with its several annexes. The school building on Church street stands on the site of the old "Lyceum."

## CHAPTER IX.

### GEN. BENHAM'S CAREER.

IT has been said before that the eminence now called Buckwheat hill was for a great many years known as Burying Ground hill; but the first settlers called it Meeting House hill. So gradual is the slope that the altitude is not felt until the summit is reached. There is no higher land between it and Long Island sound.

Young men and maidens, who are older now, have in a spirit of sentimental patriotism, climbed it at break of day upon the Fourth of July to plant a flag there at sunrise and sing "The Star Spangled Banner" as the folds floated out. Young men have "stood on the hill at midnight" and watched the moon rise against the shoulder of Mount Lamentation.

At the foot of the hill, at the junction of Parker avenue and Ann street, there stands a large two-storied farm-house, built in the Meeting House hill era. Of the better class of New England farm-houses of those early days, it is one of the best specimens now to be seen. Any lover of old houses will be charmed with its paneled wainscoting and its unique cupboards, with arched paneling in the doors.

A correspondence with a lady, whose forefathers were among the pioneer families and whose home was in Meriden until her marriage, has recalled a story which has to do with this dwelling.

During the war of 1812 there came to Canada an Englishman with two daughters. After the war he returned to England leaving behind one of the girls,

then about sixteen, to be educated. There always seemed something strange about this. Soon after she married and was early left a widow with one son, who found a home with English or Scotch relatives, and never seems to have entered his mother's life or interests afterwards. His name was never known here. To the New England young man of that period Canada seems to have been a brilliant land of promise, or a land of brilliant promise, which is not quite the same thing.

Among others, a son of "old Squire" Benham wended his way there, found the young widow and married her. He did not live long, and again she was left a widow with a little son. Her husband had left her with an impression that his relatives would care for her, and with her boy she started for the "States."

After she had spent her small hoard she almost begged her way, but was helped by clergymen of her church as often as an opportunity presented. Living on crackers and tea principally, she finally reached Meriden, to find disappointment. She always said she was treated very badly, but she probably expected too much. She knew her husband's father bore the title of squire, and very likely had visions of an English esquire and his belongings. She found a New England farmer esquire of a very different type.

Esquire Benham was known in the community as a man of affairs, and his counsel had weight in town meetings; but he kept his boots and stockings for Sundays and public days, and in summer traversed his domain like an Arab Sheik minus the sandals.

After a season of discomfort all round, when, as is usual, everybody and nobody was in fault, the young widow was packed off with her child to her relations in

England. There she was coldly received. She was at best very plain in feature, and now, reddened by exposure and made more unlovely by her hard life, her English relatives declared themselves "disgusted by her coarseness," and she was sent off into the country "out of sight."

Finally, they set her afloat again for America, and once more she came to Meriden and sought a home with her son's grandfather, Esquire Benham. This was early in the twenties.

The house to which reference has been made was owned by a miserly widower named Liberty Perkins, who built the house and lived in it.

A plan of getting rid of Mrs. Benham was suggested, and measures were taken to bring about its consummation. He was represented to her as a man of property, as he was, for he owned large tracts of land in the southern part of the town. An unfenced lot, traversed now by the city line at South Broad street, was known for years as the Perkins lot, and nobody seemed to know exactly to whom it really belonged until the city lines were fixed, and the property was likely to be worth something, then the heirs were easily found.

The marriage sped to a conclusion. Elderly people used to relate with glee how Liberty, during his brief wooing, resurrected an antediluvian old "gig" and, with his half starved steed, used to drive to Squire Benham's on the old road (Colony street).

Perkins wanted a housekeeper, and he thought he had managed to get a healthy woman with "faculty" and a servant for nothing. Mrs. Benham knew nothing of work of any kind, never having done any, and she thought it beneath her to even try to learn. She had but one thought in all the world, and that was her

darling son. He had been her companion in all her wanderings, which had been all for his sake. Her ambition for him and her belief in his future never failed her. And now had begun for her a new series of troubles. She had married the dreadful old miser to give her boy a home and some advantages for an education, and Perkins would have none of him. He called the boy's studious habits laziness and his books nonsense.

How the boy managed to get books to study was a marvel; but he did get them, and hidden in his mother's garret, for she was a great deal of the time obliged to keep him concealed there, he actually prepared himself for Yale College and entered there. But his pride rebelled against the menial duties (he had undertaken to defray his expenses), and by push and generalship he somehow got from the Hon. Ralph I. Ingersoll an appointment to West Point.

This was the more remarkable, for at that time none but the sons of officers stood any chance at all, and Henry Benham had nothing but himself. From that time all things went on well with him. He graduated with honor and afterward held for some years a lucrative and honorable position at West Point.

As soon as he was able he rescued his mother from her bondage and made her comfortable and happy thenceforward until the end of her life. Only two or three people now recall her as she chanted in season and out of season the praises of that worshiped son. Clad in a stiff, black silk and decked with a gold watch and chain, all of them his gifts, she would tell over and over again the story of her long and weary voyages and disappointments. She used to tell how from certain circumstances of his birth she "always knew he would be a holy child."

Somehow her odd speeches that sounded so funny then have a pathetic echo now. Nothing could destroy her faith in her boy's future. She believed in his success with the prescience of second sight. This son, known as Gen. Henry Benham, was for many years commandant at the Charleston navy yard. He died at his country seat in a beautiful Vermont town.

In front of, or rather on the south side of the old Benham house, known now as Higby place, at the foot of Ann street, there used to stand a large black walnut tree then, as now, rare in this region. To guard the fruit of this tree from pillage by children and squirrels was the chief concern and occupation of the last years of Liberty Perkins' life. His grave is in the Broad street cemetery.

The old house is rented to tenants who occupy it for awhile and depart, not knowing that the bleak attic once sheltered a brave, ambitious youth who fought his battle of life single-handed and won it. His mother could only give him shelter, and that secretly. Kind neighbors supplied him with the barest necessities.

There, in the cold and darkness, he prepared himself for and he ultimately gained one of the highest positions in the gift of his country.

## CHAPTER X.

### FACTS ABOUT THE BROWN FAMILY.

**A**BOUT the year 1800 a farmer named Amasa Brown removed from a town on the other side of the Connecticut river into Meriden. He had been rich enough to make comfortable a family of thirteen children, among them two pairs of twin daughters, and to give them all the advantages of education that were to be had at that time.

Just when this chronicle takes them up six of the children had died, among them the eldest twins, thirteen years old.

Just at this time, also, Mr. Brown had lost a great deal of his property through over-trustfulness in other people, and he found himself growing an old man and a poor one. An attachment between Jerusha Brown, the eldest daughter, an accomplished young woman, and a young man who belonged to a family prominent in the early annals of the state had been openly acknowledged. He was well educated and moved in the best society, and the best society of that day was very good indeed. But he was idle, self-indulgent and purposeless.

At that period, and for many years thereafter, throughout the central counties of the state the manufacture of tinware was an important business. A market for the finished articles was found by sending out "peddlers," who, with their well-stocked wagons, went all over New England and into the middle and southern states.

The business was very profitable, and both the

manufacturers and the peddlers accumulated what at that time was considered very handsome fortunes.

The affairs of the Brown family were nearing a crisis, when Archibald Plumb, whose business as a peddler of tinware had taken him to the home of the family, proposed marriage to the eldest daughter. He promised if she would accept him to provide for her father and mother, and that he would also help her brothers find employment, which they had not hitherto done.

Naturally the young woman hesitated, but she knew that young C——, her first lover, had never even supported himself, and very likely never would, and so for the sake of her old parents she married Mr. Plumb.

He was as good as his word. He owned a house in Meriden, and to this he brought the family. As soon as possible he built another house, and in this he placed Mr. and Mrs. Brown and their children, and so began the family history of the Browns in Meriden.

In this year of 1899 one house is still standing on Broad street in excellent repair. The older of the two has recently been torn down and a handsome dwelling house erected on the spot.

Mr. Plumb found business for the eldest son that took him to the Southern states, where for a time he seemed going on well, but he went wrong somehow and was executed as a criminal in New Orleans with a severity peculiar to the time and the locality.

His fate was carefully concealed from his mother. A good many years after an inquisitive child began asking questions about him. Mrs. Plumb rose hastily and left the room. The unlucky little girl was impressively told never to mention his name again.

The second son stayed at home and took care of his

aged parents. He became engaged to a young woman belonging to a very respectable and very strict family. Nobody seems to have made any objection to the match until the time of the marriage was discussed, but then the parents of the young woman took the stand that before marrying their daughter he must join the church, the present Center church.

This the young man refused to do, and the end of it was that he left town, and from the day of his departure was never again heard from. The young woman married after some years had passed, and called her only son by the name of the man to whom she had been engaged so long before.

Perhaps it may be well to give here the curious fact that her husband went away suddenly leaving her with a family of seven children, the youngest an infant, and was never again seen in Meriden, and his fate was never known.

The younger twins had grown into a very lovely girlhood, but they were delicate and drooped and died within a little while of each other as twins so often do. Of thirteen children only three were now left.

Meanwhile Mrs. Plumb had become the mother of an only son. It was said from his infancy he showed a singular want of love for his parents or for people in general, his affection being given to horses to the exclusion of all other animals.

At that time and for many years thereafter, usually in the spring of the year, long strings or packs of horses used to be driven from the north, following the turnpike southward. These always halted at the tavern. If the droves were large, they were cared for by four or five men, two of whom followed in a team while the others walked. If they came into town

at the close of the day they stayed at the tavern all night.

William Plumb was always interested and excited by the arrival of these bands of horse traders, and had only just passed his twelfth birthday when he followed one of them out of town.

When next his mother looked on his face he was fifty-two years old, gray, bald and seeming every bit as aged as herself. He had been gone thirty years when he first wrote to her. He said he had been all his life a stage driver in the West. He had been married three times to "good women," and had three daughters. One he had named after his mother.

Some years after writing he came to Meriden, and the mother and son met for the first time in forty years. He stayed a day or two, and then they parted, and never saw each other again.

Mr. Plumb, the man's father, had become a confirmed drunkard, had lost all his property but one house, then reformed and became a sincere and devout member of the Baptist church. He died long before his son had written home.

There remains now nothing but the record of the lives of the two youngest children, Roderick and Ann Brown, and we must go back some years.

From his first coming to Meriden, Mr. Brown, the father, had suffered from a painful, chronic disease, and soon after the disappearance of his grandson, William Plumb, it became evident that a crisis was imminent.

He had always been fond of his family and ambitious for them. The failure of his hopes for them had nearly broken his heart, but all was not done yet. One day the stage brought into town a well-dressed man of good manner and address. He brought with him, besides

other luggage, two large trunks, to which he seemed to attach an especial value. He took lodgings with the Browns, with whom he soon became intimate.

He called himself Sherman, and said he was the owner of a large and valuable farm in the state of New York, and gave the name of a town where he said the farm was located. He also showed a plan of a house which he said he owned. This plan showed a library among other desirable features.

He made furious love to Ann Brown, and so ingratiated himself with her father, that at last the latter declared that he could die happy if he could only see his daughter the wife of Sherman, and they were married at his bedside.

Six weeks after the marriage Sherman left the house just as usual, and from that hour was never seen or heard of in this part of the country. The trunks so carefully guarded by him were opened, and contained a quantity of stones and nothing else. The place he pretended was his home was finally heard from. At that date men had not yet "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes." No such person had ever been known there, neither was there in that vicinity any such house as he had described.

Poor old Mr. Brown's heart was broken, and he gladly closed his tired eyes on a world where he had suffered so much.

Ann did not take her husband's desertion very much to heart. A babe was born and died. She obtained a divorce from her pseudonymous spouse, and then she set up a home, with her mother as her housekeeper, and started the first and, for many years, the only millinery enterprise in the town.

Roderick Brown, her brother, was an easy-going,

happy-go-lucky young fellow, with no vices, even if with no very pronounced virtues, and he had found something to do by which he was making an honest living.

Of a sudden his friends were shocked to hear that he had been convicted, it was said, of horse stealing, and sentenced to state's prison, whither he went and served out his sentence. He finally returned home. Looking back one is inclined to think that Dr. Hough suspected the truth, for he stood by the young man and helped him in every possible way.

After a while Roderick married into a most respectable family in Litchfield county, and it really seemed as though he would be able to make his way. Everything bid fair for a successful future, when for no reason that then appeared he ran away.

It was years and years ago; but one person is living who was a child at the time, and has never forgotten the look of awful, hopeless despair on that young wife's face as she came suddenly into her presence two or three days after his disappearance.

One week afterward she gave birth to a dead infant. For a long time she refused to see or be seen by anybody. All this time Ann, his sister, had led apparently a very jolly life. She had so many admirers, both married and single, that many people looked rather askance at her while she was so signally affable and good-natured, or, perhaps, one ought to say, good-tempered (not quite the same thing), that people could not help liking her in spite of their prejudices.

Among those Ann Brown, one time Sherman, captivated was a cool-headed, thorough-going business man. When in town he was never long out of her presence. However, his absences from town would often extend

over a year or two, and then his natural caution seemed to help him to realize the risk he would run if he married her. Finally, after fifteen years of dallying, they were, it was said, married in New York. They took up their residence in a distant part of the country, and for some years Ann Brown and her works were nearly forgotten.

Mrs. Plumb (her eldest sister Jerusha) had taken her mother back to live with her. Poor old Mrs. Brown had grown very crabbed and perverse, and seemed to take especial pains to talk of Ann's affection and kindness when with her. "Ann had left her mother wholly unprovided for," and Mrs. Brown more than insinuated that matters at the present were sadly different.

Mrs. Plumb bore it all pleasantly, and only seemed to wish to make her mother's life as easy and comfortable as possible.

One morning she went to her mother's room to assist her in rising as usual, and found her dying. There was only time for a hand clasp, a word of blessing, and then another long and weary life's journey ended in an unbroken rest.

Twenty years passed by. Ann was dead. Rod erick's wife had secured a divorce, had made a success of her own life, had a nice home, won by her own exertion. She refused to marry again.

It naturally seemed now as though the troubles of the Browns were over and done with. One day she (Rod erick's wife) was summoned to a neighbor's. Quickly entering the house she opened the door, and there stood the man who had left her so mysteriously almost a lifetime before. A broken-down man, but she married him over again, took him to her own home, and

faithfully cared for him until his death, two years later. After that she married again and went to another city, where she died.

After the death of Mrs. Plumb, the truth came out about Roderick Brown. The sister, Ann Brown, was a forger. She had contrived that her brother should appear the guilty party, and for her sake he bore the penalty and made no sign. But when he found that she had done the same thing the second time, flight seemed to him the lesser evil.

If the real culprit felt any remorse for her crime, or any pity for those who suffered so cruelly from it, she never showed either. To the last day of her life she was gay and charming in her manner, and was very truly loved, even by those who had every reason to doubt her integrity. She was doubtless a creature of extraordinary personal magnetism.

After her death it was found out that she had again forged the names of two of her nearest friends, and that discovery was certain. She died suddenly and very strangely, and her friends kept silence.

Mrs. Plumb, her sister, lived to a great age, and was greatly beloved. The memory of her unfaltering faith and gentle patience has been a help and comfort to some upon whom the "chances and changes of this mortal life" have pressed heavily.

Sometimes the "word in season" she has spoken has been passed along to cheer and help some other soul to whom the problem of living was growing a hopeless puzzle.

Harriet and Caroline Brown, the twins, lie in the Broad Street Cemetery, but no one can now tell just where they are buried. Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Plumb have a monument in the East Cemetery.

Ann is buried beside them, but her whole name will not be found there. It was carefully suppressed when the record of the graves was made. Her epitaph reads thus:

"ANN"

"She will never come to me,  
But I will go to her."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MANUFACTURE OF IVORY COMBS.

IN the first quarter of the century all the methods of manufacturing were slow. Those of ivory comb making were extremely so, as the processes were peculiarly nice and delicate. The ivory tusks differed much in their fineness of grain. The finer grades were far less liable to warp or break.

The manner of making a dressing comb was as follows: An especially fine tusk having been selected, it was sawn into blocks of varied lengths, and these again into rectangular bars about half an inch in thickness.

The next process rounded these, leaving on one side a narrow, flat surface, into which a row of tiny sockets were carefully drilled. The teeth, having been each sawn separately, were rounded and pointed by a delicate machine into shape and size to exactly fit the sockets, into which they were driven by a tiny hammer. Afterwards they were carefully drilled through the back, and teeth and brass pins inserted, smoothed and polished, making, when finished, a most luxurious hair-dressing implement that would last a life time.

Sometime, it must have been 1830, or a little later, the Prattsville Co. began the making of wooden combs. A small reservoir or pond was constructed just about at the present crossing of Camp and Pratt streets. A very small building was put up closely adjacent. This venture was abandoned after two or three years, and the pond emptied. The foundations remained there for a good many years. It was an excellent and favorite

location for the propagation of snakes and red raspberries.

Mr. Pratt usually took the finished goods to either Hartford or New Haven in his own private conveyance, from whence they were shipped by boat.

It was not until the late thirties that ivory dust was generally known to have any value as a fertilizer. Heretofore the refuse from the factories had been thrown away. When its virtues became known, probably on the principle that one cannot have too much of a good thing, a favorite orchard of young trees was plentifully bestrewn with the substance, some of it wet from the saws, some of it dry from the finishing.

Great was the dismay at the discovery that the grass in the orchard was rapidly turning brown, in fact was "burnt up." But the next year the grass and trees flourished luxuriantly, and the ivory waste soon became coveted and eagerly bought up by progressive farmers.

About the year 1836, the Prattsville business having attained an importance which made a change necessary, the old building by the dam was abandoned and a larger building erected on the present location of Miller Bros.' Cutlery. Many important improvements were introduced. Many of them by Mr. Fenner Bush. Some of them by Zina K. Murdock, who was a member of the firm, as was also Aaron Pratt, Ezra Pratt and Mr. Bush. Mr. Howard was dead, and the new firm was known as Julius Pratt & Co.

Mr. Murdock invented and, aided by Mr. Bush, perfected an arrangement for cutting the teeth of the combs, the exact reverse of the old method. The exquisitely fine saw remaining stationary while the ivory plate moved, stopping automatically when the length of the plate was reached. These improvements were

not patented, but were carefully watched to prevent piracy.

As the years went on other improved methods were adopted, until much of the manufacturing was done by delicately adjusted machinery that seemed really intelligent in operation.

Most of those employed were young women, the daughters of persons in comfortable circumstances. At that time there were scarcely any avenues of profit open to women. The first young woman who took a position as clerk in a store in Meriden took that new departure about 1840. She was excused for so daring a venture on the ground that, after all, she was not so very young and had money invested in the stock.

Mr. Pratt was inordinately proud of being able to say that within the space of a few years eight young women who had been in the employ of the firm married clergymen, some of whom reached eminence in their profession. Others became the wives of men who reached positions of influence and acquired wealth.

Fenner Bush had been a member of the firm from the very first, and although his name did not appear, his opinions always had great weight. In character, Mr. Pratt and Mr. Bush were not inapt exponents of the fable of the wind and the sun.

Mr. Pratt was quick in arriving at conclusions, and, having once got headed in any particular direction, was pretty apt to remain so; although if judiciously let alone his final decisions would be found conspicuously just and benevolent.

Mr. Bush, like Mr. Pratt, had the "courage of his convictions," and was sufficiently tenacious of his opinions when he had formed them, but was always patient and reasonable in listening to complaints, and gentle

and sympathetic, even if he could not redress Mr. Bush had more influence with Mr. Pratt than any other human being, notwithstanding or perhaps because of their opposite characteristics, mental and physical.

They were associated in business and were close neighbors for a long lifetime, yet it is believed that in all that time no word or look other than kindly ever passed between them.

Mr. Bush was an inventor, and therefore a thoughtful man, and he would sometimes become literally lost in thought. Mrs. Bush, "a perfect woman, nobly planned," was eminently a housekeeper, and, like a sensible woman, usually preferred to stay at home on Sunday, and see that everything was prepared for the comfort of her family to wearing herself out by walking the considerable distance to "meeting."

On one of the rare exceptions to this, Mr. Bush, who had become absorbed in his thoughts, forgot her presence and walked home without her. Naturally Mrs. Bush felt hurt, and said she thought that the impression would be given that he did not care very much about her.

"Now, really," said Mr. Bush, "I was thinking of you all the way home, and what a good dinner you would have ready for me."

An experience of a quarter of a century of married life emboldens one to recommend the above speech as a text for the serious consideration of young matrons. In the words of the immortal Captain Cuttle: "To overhaul your catechism, and, when found, make note on." Also, to add in the words of the above worthy's chief friend and counselor, Jack Bunsby: "the bearings of this observation lays in the application on it."

Mr. Bush was fond of books, and he and Dr. Hough

owned the only collections of books in town worthy to be called a library.

It has been said before that Mr. Pratt was a man of much firmness of will. A certain Frederick Pearl had in some way wronged several Meriden people. How or why has always been a mystery. Children and young persons were then kept from the knowledge of many things that are now freely discussed. Mr. Pratt was among those who had suffered, and he had Pearl arrested and imprisoned in Canada. (Probably Canada was not then a "city of refuge.") There Mr. Pratt kept him at his own expense, and there he said he should stay until the last possible moment. But all things come to end sometime, and so at last Pearl was free.

In the afternoon of the day before Thanksgiving, 1846, Pearl was seen in Meriden, and that night the factory was burned to the ground, the alarm being given by the man who slept in the building.

All that could be done to save the property was merely nothing, for the fire engine owned by the company was always out of order. This engine was the only one in town. It was nearly as possible like a water cart, with a crank on each side worked by hand. After all was over, Mr. Pratt went home and told Mrs. Pratt that the factory was gone.

An indication of the character of that most excellent woman and Christian can be discerned in her answer:

"I hope Mr. Hall (the watchman) is safe."

Mr. Pratt and Mr. Bush returned at once to the ruins. In the confusion the watchman had not been thought of, and now he could not be found.

The Rev. George W. Perkins, who was then pastor of the Center Congregational Church, who had seen

disastrous fires in Montreal, where he had lived for some years before coming to Meriden, came to the scene and pointed out the charred remains as they lay near the bell among the smoking embers.

Mr. Hall was a young man, and was to have been married in two weeks. The messenger who bore the sad tidings to the poor expectant bride never could remember how he did it; but he said she stood looking steadily at him, and then, without a word, sank down in a heap on the floor.

The remains of the unfortunate watchman were buried with impressive ceremonies in the old Broad Street Cemetery.

From the date of the fire Frederick Pearl was never again heard of in Meriden.

Arrangements were quickly made to rebuild of brick for the second time. Mr. Pratt remarked: "That for anything he could see brick burnt as easily as wood."

Meanwhile Mr. Webb, who had by this time moved his business to Hanover, offered the use of his factory at night, and in a few days "Julius Pratt & Co." were doing a regular business between the hours of six in the evening and five in the morning, and continued so to do until the new building in Prattsburg was completed.

The making of piano keys was added to the comb business. The last days of the comb-making industry were approaching. For a number of years there had been an adverse element in the concern. (Not a Meriden man, however.)

A determination had been openly expressed that sooner or later affairs as they then stood should be broken up. Mr. Pratt and Mr. Bush were growing old, and desired peace and quiet.

Aaron Pratt was dead, and Mr. Murdock had gone

into another business. As is almost always the case, circumstances favored the aggressive party, and the whole business was finally moved to Deep River, where it is still carried on.

A thriving business was thus lost to Meriden through the potency of envy, jealousy and spite—three disreputable factors that have accomplished more mischief in their low, mean line than their ravaging but more respectable compeers, “Plague, Pestilence and Famine.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### DOOR LATCHES AND SLAVERY.

IN 1831 a blacksmith shop stood on the present site of the William Lewis block on West Main street. Just back of this was a small building in which was carried on the making of door latches.

These latches were an improvement on those of hammered iron, in use one hundred years before. They were the joint invention of Homer Curtis and Harlowe Isbell, who entered into partnership and began the making of them in the above year. These latches met with a ready sale, and the business was succeeding, when it was found that an article just about the same was being placed upon the market. The innovating concern was in Maine.

Being interviewed, the principals explained by saying "they were so far off they thought it would not make any difference." A compromise between the two firms was agreed upon, the Maine firm paying the Meriden firm a royalty for the use of their name.

After a while Curtis & Isbell, finding an inferior article bearing their name upon the market, set themselves to another inventive effort, and succeeded in evolving a rather cumbrous hybrid between a door knob and a door latch, in which the knob took the place of the thumb piece of the earlier article. These latches were blacked, and the varnish was hardened by baking in a kiln. As the only fuel was wood, and the desired result could not be obtained under a temperature less

than three hundred, it will be readily seen that difficulties lay in the way, for while the varnish would flake off at a less heat, the handles, which were made of zinc and some other metals, would not infrequently melt at that point of calidity.

To indicate when the proper heat was reached, a glass was inserted in the furnace door and a thermometer hung inside. This plan has been used in cooking stoves since then, and called a new invention.

The business grew and met with difficulties, of course; but the company surmounted them. At last the business was moved, for more room, to the locality now more than covered by the spacious buildings of the Bradley & Hubbard Co. Here they prospered for some years until the concern came to grief from a cause which at first sight would seem to have nothing to do with the trouble.

The subject of southern slavery was beginning to be discussed with a good deal of energy, and Mr. Curtis and Mr. Isbell held very radical views, and expressed them freely.

Hitherto the slavery question had been treated almost exclusively on the ground of the injustice to the negro, and his sufferings under the system. From this point of view the anti-slavery party had been formed.

Mr. Curtis and Mr. Isbell were then the only persons who voted the anti-slavery ticket in Meriden. The immediate result to them was that their factory was set on fire and burned down with all the contents. The firm rebuilt and started again, with a good prospect for success, when their factory was again destroyed in the same way and for the same reason as before.

It may seem incredible that a sin of political opinion should have been visited so vindictively upon two

comparatively obscure men. But the anarchist spirit is the same always—born of self-interest in the leaders and ignorance in the followers.

Also, it should be remembered, that although there was very little foreign element anywhere in New England and none at all in Meriden, yet newspapers were not accessible except to the few, and books were scarce. Besides, it was honestly believed, even by those who identified themselves with the obnoxious party, that to anger the South meant poverty and ruin to the North.

However, the political aspect changed, and the anti-slavery party became the Free Soil party, and many were added to it.

Looking backward down the vista of the years at the seeming fatuity of this political movement, a new meaning is given to the words: “Despise not the day of small things;” for whether it likes it or not, the Republican party of 1899 must acknowledge itself the offspring of the party that in the first third of the century had but two adherents in Meriden and but seven thousand in the whole United States.

But to return to the door latches.

The later invention had never met with much favor, and was not profitable enough to go on alone, so the firm added the making of iron toys—tiny spades, shovels, rakes, little kettles and flat-irons. A foundry was built, of which the chimney is still standing, and for the third time the firm seemed on the road to prosperity.

Soon after this Mr. Isbell left town, and the latches were superseded by another invention, which has been perfected into the present door fastening methods. Matters were progressing very well, when for the third time the latch works were maliciously set on fire, this

time the offence being Mr. Curtis' radical views on the temperance question.

Just at this time another cause hastened the final removal of this particular business, and at the same time crippled half the other business enterprises in the town. There are still persons living who remember when a building, now lost somewhere in the depths of F. J. Wheeler's hardware store at West Main street, stood on the present site of the Meriden House. It was a country store, owned by Major Elisha Allan Cowles.

To this store came as a clerk about the year 1836 a boy who afterwards proved to be one of the strangest characters Meriden has ever known. He was full of business, and to all appearances given up to the interests of his employer.

At that time church membership was reinforced by religious awakenings or revivals. At these seasons ordinary work was neglected, and nearly the whole community gave their time to protracted meetings and sacred topics.

One would not seem to speak irreverently, but the exercises and the sermons were, and were meant to be, terrifying, and sensitive persons often suffered extreme mental agony. Afterward, finding relief from this state, they joined the churches they preferred.

In one of these revivals Curtis Lemuel North, the young clerk, professed himself very deeply moved, and perhaps with some sincerity, for he always seemed to keep his religious principles and his business practice entirely distinct from each other.

From that time he secured a very strong hold on the confidence of Major Cowles and Mrs. Cowles, so that his influence caused the dismissal and disgrace of an

innocent fellow clerk, whose widowed mother died shortly after in consequence.

Curtis retained the confidence of Major Cowles and his wife through any amount of evil report. He had always some plausible excuse ready, or even a direct falsehood if things looked too shady. At last Major Cowles died, and Curtis was, of course, deeply grieved and profoundly sympathetic. So much was he moved that he offered to go to Hartford and procure a coffin. A suitable one could not at that time be procured in Meriden.

He went, first of all, to the insurance office in which Major Cowles had held some position. By his representations he secured the vacant place. He purchased the coffin and came back home, having done a fine stroke of business in more ways than one.

He lost no time in insuring (all by himself) the life of Dr. Isaac I. Hough, who, knowing himself to have organic heart disease, had never tried to insure his life. Two or three years after this Dr. Hough was found dead on the floor of his room. Curtis managed thus to secure three thousand dollars.

From this time he began a career that was, finally, nearly or quite the financial ruin of everybody who came in contact with him, and that meant anybody he heard of who had any income, large or small.

The really strange thing was that although some doubted him when out of his presence, they were pliant to his will when in contact with him. He built the house now owned by Edmund A. Parker, corner of Washington and Colony streets, set up a carriage and pair of horses, and after a flourish of a year or two failed, carrying with him half the population of the town.

To this day it is a mystery how he managed so much rascality and escaped. He cheated his benefactress, Mrs. Cowles, out of more than half her property. He ruined Walter Webb's ivory comb business in Hanover. Mr. Webb had loaned him a few hundred, and to his horror found himself liable for one hundred and ten thousand dollars, all he was worth and rather more.

Homer Curtis loaned him three hundred dollars and found himself ruined. Men found themselves in debt for sums of eight and ten or more thousands, who had no idea of such a predicament. To the question, "Why in all the world did not somebody put Curtis North in prison then and there?" the answer was made, "Because nobody could put their finger on anything he did in any way that would convict him." He had always made a catspaw of somebody else. He literally "stole the livery of Heaven to serve the devil in," for all this time he never failed, wherever he might be, if he got a chance, to organize a Sunday school or conduct a prayer meeting.

"Judgment and justice are not of this world;" for this man, a known liar and forger, after leaving Meriden became the husband of a wealthy woman, and preached what no doubt, in spite of Curtis North and all his kind, is the gospel.

His first wife, a most estimable woman, is buried in the West Cemetery.

The hardware business conducted by Homer Curtis was ruined. Mr. Curtis was urged to take certain steps which would have secured himself but would have injured others. He said his "own integrity was more precious to him than all else. This remained to him, and not for any fancied gain would he part with it."

When Kansas became a Free Soil state, Mr. Isbell

emigrated thither. His character was too sanguine and visionary to make him a successful man anywhere, and his family endured many hardships. Mrs. Isbell visited Meriden afterward and received many gifts. Feeling, as was natural, grieved by the change in her circumstances, she said, with tears:

"Once I also had something to give away."

Mrs. Julius Pratt's answer to this was the perfection of Christian grace:

"You must consider we are all sisters."

There is now, in 1899, one old house on Curtis street that still has affixed to its doors the latches made by Curtis & Isbell.

Some of Mr. Curtis' family are still living here and sit on good men's seats.

Of all the men who have come and gone in this "transitory life" of three-quarters of a century, not one has seemed so thoroughly what was said of another than Homer Curtis—"An Israelite, indeed, in whom was no guile."

Mr. Curtis, perhaps, was too unworldly to be what the world calls a successful man; but no child of his need blush for or wish to have concealed anything he ever did or said.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### SUNDAY MORNING IN THE EARLY THIRTIES.

NOTHING could be more quiet and idyllic than a June Sunday morning in the early thirties. No sound of labor was heard, either within or without the dwellings.

The atmosphere was so clear that the tall, weather-beaten hemlock that for many years stood out from the steep face of West Peak could be distinctly seen outlined against the sky.

No smoke of coal and no odor of gas was in the air, for coal was not then known in Meriden except by hearsay. The thin vapor which rose high from the chimneys was from the burning logs of oak, maple and hickory. The housewives were very knowing in those matters, and they would accept no other than "hard wood," for they must have coals in the fire-place and a log to cover with ashes in order to "keep fire."

The nine o'clock church bell was rung Sunday morning by one of the "Butler boys," or by "Uncle John" Butler himself. The tall clock in the corner of the Butler "keeping room" kept the standard time for the town. Every night the clock was wound by Uncle John. The exercise was one of importance. The narrow door in the case was opened and carefully laid back, disclosing the great pendulum suspended by a long wire. The loaded end of one and then of the other of the long cords which carried the great square weights were drawn out their full length, the winder stepping backwards as he drew.

The church bell was also rung at nine o'clock every night through the week. This bell tells the same hour now (1899) from the same old tower. In those days the sound traveled far, for there were no tall towers to break its resonance. Upon Sunday morning its ringing was the signal for active preparation for "Church" and "Meeting." It then was thought most indecorous to be late at public worship.

From the "Farms," from the "Plains," from "Webbsville," from "Prattsville," from "Clarksville," and from the outlying farms everybody was expected to go except those who were ill or were too young.

The old people rode but the younger walked, taking their time, for they must start early enough to be in season. The horses took on a decorous, leisurely Sunday amble, but the dogs knew perfectly well that they were expected to stay at home on Sunday.

Everywhere in New England the Sunday services were held both morning and afternoon. In the winter there was an interval of an hour at noon. In the summer it was an hour and a half. The heads of families brought capacious lunch baskets, a reticule sufficing for those who had only themselves to think of.

The elders passed the "nooning" in visiting from pew to pew, interchanging such news and views as was supposed not inconsistent with the day and place. If a point was stretched in this regard, why, they were human. The Sunday school occupied the younger people. The books of the Sunday school libraries seemed to have been compiled to demonstrate how much unreadable and totally uninteresting matter could be put into print, and selected to show how many of such books could be got together.

The Sunday school library of St. Andrew's was one

shining oasis in this desert of no ideas. It had a few of Miss Edgeworth's books, nearly all Mrs. Sherwood's, and two or three of Mrs. Cameron's (Mrs. Sherwood's sister). These books were finally read all to pieces.

In the warm weather any who lived in the vicinity of the three churches expected their friends and relatives to call at noon. They were regaled with viands especially prepared for such hospitality.

The Sunday attire of the captains, the majors, the colonels and the squires, of whom there were plenty, with now and then a judge and the deacons, varied little from year to year. If the waist measure lessened, the increased comfort compensated for the slouchiness of the garment's fit.

If the girth so increased that neither the housewife's needle or the tailor's art were adequate, a new garment was constructed as nearly like the old one as it could be made.

The Sunday dress of the women had more variety. The "bleaching box" would sometimes take fire, and the ten or fifteen years' old straw bonnet would suffer from the accident, and thus a change became a necessity. Even then the remains of the old material would be so incorporated with the new that the novelty was not distracting.

One old lady, very old at the time, Mrs. Mindwell Merriam, always adhered to the costume of her youth, probably about 1750. Her Sunday dress in the summer never varied in style or material. It was of some dark blue stuff, pongee silk probably, and was very short and straight in the skirt, showing her low shoes tied with black ribbons. The waist was like a short sack. The sleeves came only to the elbow, and were finished there by wide ruffles of black lace, which fell

over the tops of her long, black silk mitts. The short cloak of thick black satin was trimmed with wide black lace, and the curious black satin bonnet, something like but not quite a hat, had also a fall of lace around the brim.

That lace would make a collector break one of the commandments, and be tempted to break another.

There was in those days a great deal more sectarian exclusiveness and stand-offishness than there is now. With a certain air of dignity and self-respect, elderly people carried also an aspect of severity and repression that repelled the younger people and kept them out of touch and sympathy with their elders. Vivacity was not deemed becoming, and merriment was almost a sin.

Doubtless the theology of the period influenced the most of them. They were fairly beaten down by the teaching of most of the sectarian publications, and by the pulpit teaching of the certainty that a dreadful doom must befall them, and those most dear to them, unless they were sure of their "evidences." These "evidences" were often more evident to those persons most sure of them than they were to others.

Prayer, sermon and exhortation all turned on the justice and wrath of the Creator. Very little was taught of His praise, almost nothing of His love. It was held as a discredit to the Episcopalians that they were a more cheerful set. In numbers they were far in a minority, otherwise they compared favorably with the other denominations.

It was not possible to hear the grand "Gloria in Excelsis," the uplifting "Te Deum," the splendid "Trisagion," and to repeat over and over again "Our Father," and not be susceptive of some of their spirit,

and thus to look up to the Deity in another light than as an awful avenger.

This religious, gloomy severity and sadness are now almost wholly of the past. Only the Episcopalians talked of going to "Church," the others went to "Meeting."

A little girl who had spent most of her short life at the South was asked if she had been to church or meeting. Sorely puzzled by the question, she said she "didn't know."

In the Congregational church, in the seat nearest the door, always sat every Sunday a negro, by name Jake Freeman. Rain or shine, he was always in his place. He was the only colored voter in town. He owned a small property "over East." Next him his wife sat with rolling eyes that took in everything all over the place. In the corner of the seat sat, very upright, Chloe Deming. She was Jake Freeman's sister.

"Black Chloe" was a very tall woman, and large in proportion. She was very black, and very proud of her complexion. Chloe was also proud of her bonnet. Regarded as a bonnet, this structure was simply colossal, crown and front vying in altitude.

A heavily worked black lace veil was tied around the crown, and always worn drawn exactly lengthwise, leaving just half of her expansive face exposed to sight. Arrayed in this headgear, Chloe comported herself as one who had achieved that crowning glory desired of woman—a perfect bonnet.

Chloe was also aristocratic. She washed and cleaned house for none but "real good folks." She also reprobred and instructed in "manners" the younger members of the family she worked for, much to her

own edification. The temptation to give Chloe's recipe for soup cannot be resisted.

Chloe stood at the washtub, with one hand on the rubbing board and the other upholding a dripping garment, her eyes brimming over with tears that ran down her cheeks as she told her sympathetic listener the story of the illness of her son, who had just died of consumption.

"Willyum didnt have no appetite," said Chloe. "Nothing didnt taste good, so I took 'er piece of pork—it was fustrate pork. Miss Collins she gin it to me, and it was fustrate. And I biled it jes' nuff ter bile it, not nuff ter make it soft, and I thickened the broth with injun meal, and I cut up some inyun tops inter it, and Willyum said it was good."

And Chloe finished with an emphatic slap of the wet garment on the board in her satisfaction at the recollection.

"Willyum" had been the trial of her life; but if he had been the best son that ever lived she could not have grieved for him more. Maybe she would not have grieved so much.

Upon this particular Sabbath morning which we are recalling, the Rev. Mr. Perkins, at the Congregational church, had just got into the swing of the long prayer, in which he never failed to irritate some of his hearers by his allusions to slavery.

At the Baptist church Rev. Harvey Miller was reading the Scriptures with most original comments of his own thereon.

At St. Andrew's the litany was being devoutly responded to, and except these low sounds the quiet was absolute.

Suddenly there broke into the repose a clamor and

din of sound that caused the very clergymen to jump in their shoes.

William Merriam's bees had swarmed, incited, doubtless, by the unwonted stillness. The unorthodox insects could only, it is supposed, be kept from going hopelessly astray by confusing whatever answered to mind in their entomological make-up.

Therefore it was that those who for the last day or two had been watching their movements, upon this Sunday morning found it expedient to sally forth with poker and tongs, iron spoons and tin pans and kettle covers; even an old brass warming-pan, with clashing lid, adding a kettle drum accompaniment to the racket.

Up and down the before-quiet street rushed the riotous vigilance house committee, doing their best to keep up with the gyrations of the whirling mass above their heads.

In the churches stern and rather resentful parents watched, with anxious eyes, their wriggling and all but giggling offspring, until, finally, the bees were secured, and once more the stillness returned.

And now the morning had passed, and the noon intervals also, and in all the churches the afternoon services drew to a close. No one would for his reputation own it, but everybody is glad when they rise for the closing hymn.

At the Congregational church, John Porter, with his magnificent voice and his violin, had led the singing. At the Baptist church, Joel Miller had led. At St. Andrew's, Edwin Curtis; and he invited the choir to meet at the church at five o'clock.

This is joyful news, for it really meant a sacred concert at that hour. So the people drop in and sit where they like and listen to the flutes and violins

and to the singers as they rehearse anthems and chants.

The sun was sinking behind the mountain as the choir sang, softly and sweetly, the hymn:

“ Fading, still fading, the last beam is shining.”

The music went on as the sun went down; and now it is done, and this Sunday has drifted into the inevitable past. The past of long ago.

If it be true that no sound is utterly lost, then somewhere in the vast phonograph of the spheres the splendid melody of John Porter's voice, the sweet contralto of dove-eyed Sarah Ives, the harmonies of the flutes and viols, still survive with other tones and other voices heard and lost in the procession of the years. And we who, in the rush of the busy street or in the quiet of home at nightfall or at break of day, are haunted by the tone—

“ Of a voice from this world gone,”

shall hear again the lost chords. Sometime, but not now; somewhere, but not here.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE MILITIA AND "TRAINING DAY."

SOMETIMES in the late thirties the Meriden militia were in a badly disorganized condition. Military rank was by no means undervalued, however. The titles of Gen. Booth, Colonel Seymour, Major Cowles and Capt. Collins dated from the war of 1812, and were as much a part of their personality as were their surnames.

Except for the military rank then acquired, and also for certain blue and scarlet uniforms, kept more carefully than people keep anything in these days of new processes and shoddy goods, the war of 1812 left very little trace.

The youthful Goddess of Liberty had sent Dame Britannia home, and told her to stay there until she could come back pleasant. And the old lady, wise in her generation, profited by past experience and did go. After that matters got themselves adjusted, and possibly a long continued peace made military tactics seem unnecessary.

The law required that the citizens should do what was called military duty, but the citizens did not see the sense of leaving necessary work to dawdle about and lose one day in the spring and another in the fall, in the busiest season of the year. Besides, their uniforms were worn out or outgrown, and they had lost their popular captain, Evelyn Beckley, and they were heartily tired of the whole thing.

It was at this crisis that a very excellent but rather unpopular man secured the captaincy of the town militia, with more eagerness and alacrity than was considered strictly becoming.

"Training day" had come, and on the short green turf, just about where the street car track crosses Charles street, stood an uneven line of men clothed in every absurdity of costume that their ingenuity could invent. One had attired himself with all his visible raiment, even to an old straw hat inside out. Another genius was brilliant with strips of tin fastened thickly on coat and trousers, and another wore a most wonderful creation of bed ticking. Turkish trousers made of curtain calico, with patterns far enough away from the artistic prints of later times, were much affected. These were worn with every sort of coat, military or not, upon which the wearers could lay hands. The guns were as varied as the costumes.

One excessively humorous person shouldered a broom, but he was promptly snubbed. The line had to be drawn somewhere. Some men would have dismissed the company on the spot. Captain — resolved that they should march around the "quarter."

This was to go from the present intersection of Broad street and East Main by the most direct route to the junction of Griswold and North Colony streets, thence down Colony street to West Main, and thence again to the point of departure. The distance was called three miles.

Upon Britannia street, just west of Broad, there stood at that time a very large, wide-spreading and peculiarly low-growing apple tree, the lower limbs resting upon the low stone wall beneath.

Having with infinite travail of soul conducted his re-

calcitrant command to this point, the helpless and dismayed captain beheld his front rank deliberately march up the stone wall into the tree and seat themselves on the sturdy branches. He ordered them down, and they laughed at him. The unhappy man lost his head altogether, and directed the men, who, either better behaved, or maybe because there was no room for them in the tree, had stayed in the road, to fire upon the occupants of the apple tree.

Probably there was not a spoonful of powder or a gun that would go off, unless backward, among the lot of them. The only result of this order was that the rested and refreshed delinquents in the tree pointed their guns at their grinning comrades in the road.

At the period we are recalling, a dwelling-house, a small shop where brass combs were manufactured for the southern market, and a country store stood between Platt avenue and Foster street.

A properly stocked country store was expected then to have among its commodities certain fluids which no sagacious person mentions in the hearing of a prohibitionist. This particular store was noted for the excellence and potency of its New England distillations.

Down what is now the smooth, well-graded Colony street, but was then the "Old Road," where the spearmint grew up to the wheel tracks and the sweet flag thrust its green spikes into the footpath, as far as the aforementioned emporium, did the bothered captain, with much weariness of spirit, contrive to march his company, but when arrived there, whether he liked it or not, his mutinous "train-band" halted.

Some poet or philosopher has remarked that in our misfit lives smiles and tears alternate with surprising

celerity and promptitude. From the sequence of events it is likely that in this instance over-much "smiling" prevailed.

A dispute between one of the fatigued warriors and a citizen not long returned from South Carolina finally culminated in a fisticuff duel that reached a crisis in an adjoining barnyard. The victorious citizen was subsequently dubbed "General Pickens" because it was alleged he fought the battle of the "Cowpens." This was not exactly historically correct, but his waggish young half brothers helped to perpetuate it, for they never called him anything else behind his back.

Captain —— never got his whole company back to the center of the town. Some of them would not go farther, and more of them could not. A great deal of ill feeling ensued, and the captain's poor old horse was maltreated to an extent that left him at the mercy of the flies all summer.

A law suit was talked of, but nothing came of it. There was only one lawyer in town then, and something ailed his throat. Soon after this an "Independent Company" was formed, with Lyman Butler as captain. They were known as the Meriden Grays.

Edwin Yale Bull and Henry Peck Judd were the fifers, John Miles and Timothy White drummers. Their uniform was of gray cloth, with sole leather steeple top caps with feathers. "General training" days were events of great importance, or at least then were considered such. Edwin Yale Bull recollects going to Waterbury, Milford and New Haven with the company.

Capt. Butler resigned after a year or two of service. His health failed, and he died of consumption at the early age of thirty-six.

After Capt. Butler's resignation, Almeron Miles, a man of remarkably fine presence, became the captain, and retained that position until "forty-nine," when he and many of his company went to California.

For a long time thereafter little attention was paid to military matters. But in 1861 a nation of soldiers was born in a day. From our cities went out husbands and lovers, brothers and sons, some of them to look never again with mortal eyes upon the faces of those who "wept sore" for their going away. And some came back to realize how in their absence "Had grown in Paradise their store."

As time lapses into the inevitable past, we reap the benefit of such times of trial. In the present admirable drill and discipline of the military, and the other two organizations which have the peace of the city and the protection of property as their especial charge, can be seen the resultant fact—that by voluntary submission to absolute authority men learn that there is such a thing as intelligent obedience.

## CHAPTER XV.

## BUTTON MAKING—THE “OREGON” ROAD.

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Where was then the gentleman ? ”

AND of course the gentlewoman. She is not mentioned, because “she” does not rhyme. To this sapient couplet with an interrogation point one answers that where our misguided forbears were thus laudably employed, the gentleman and lady were precisely where they are now—that is, in the individual.

The matter of work or labor has nothing at all to do with the question of good manners and good breeding, which is what is really meant, or with position, either, which is another thing and brings its own obligations.

In the couplet quoted there seems to lurk an insinuation that labor is inconsistent with dignified good manners. But dignity is not haughtiness. Dignity is a true sense of honor, a hatred of meanness, a high sense of personal worth and a consideration for others, and a fine perception of propriety so constant and unvarying that it has become second nature.

It happened once that some persons out for a drive found near the Meriden almshouse a number of the male inmates employed upon the road repairs eating their plentiful but coarse noon lunch.

An impulsive young girl in the party stopped the carriage, and, taking a basket of fruit, handed the con-

tents to the men, who took the apples greedily but in silence, until, one of them, a foreigner, rising, took off his hat and, in a few well-chosen words, thanked her in his own behalf and others.

He had the demeanor of a well-bred man, and evidently, Heaven help him, the feelings of one too.

By this time it is likely that somebody has recalled the remark made by somebody else to the effect that it is not possible for a woman to go straight at any subject she is intending to discuss.

But one hears so many words made about the "dignity of labor," and they seem so unnecessary, for the reason that good breeding and honorable work faithfully done make any man or woman a dignified lady or gentleman. And, besides, these desultory thoughts were called up by the memory of the men and women who were active in the early life of Meriden.

Sometime in the first fifteen years of the century Dr. Isaac I. Hough amused himself by collecting facts and data relative to the early history of the town. He gave up the enterprise, because he said he was about twelve years too late. The Rev. G. W. Perkins used these notes in compiling a pamphlet history of Meriden, but he omitted many things that seemed to him uninteresting, and gave no credit for what he used. Dr. Hough's notes, unfortunately, were not preserved.

Mrs. Bradley, who has been quoted so often, said her mother, Mrs. Hough, raised silkworms and made and spun silk—of course, woven by hand—and found it profitable. A piece of silk spun and woven at that time was in the possession of a member of the family for a good many years, when it was unfortunately destroyed, with, at the same time, part of a set of bed curtains once used upon what was called a tent—or tester—bed. These

curtains were of heavy home-made linen, embroidered with home-spun linen thread. The pattern was conventional, of tulip flower design. The colors used were red, yellow, blue and a few threads of black. These colors were of home-made dyes. The stitch used was the same as the Kensington stitch of to-day. Although more than one hundred years old when destroyed, the fabric was good, the colors bright, and the work was very little worn, except in the less heavy parts. Beautiful fine linen thread was spun and woven by the housekeepers of 1800.

Doubtless there are many specimens of this work still in existence, and valued more highly than when they were less rare.

Button making was one of Meriden's first manufactures. Dr. C. H. S. Davis says in 1794; and doubtless he is right. These first buttons were made of pewter. Very early in 1800 it must have been that Amos Curtis began the making of coat buttons. The eyes of these were made by hand, Mr. Curtis being his own mechanic. The material of which the buttons were made was "a mixture of lead and tin, or zinc, and antimony, boiled together in a great iron kettle." "The cooking" of this alloyage was superintended by Mr. Curtis in the basement kitchen of his own house, which stood a few feet south of Broad street.

Mr. William Curtis, the son of Amos, told the writer that his part of the business was to separate the cooled buttons from the molds into which the hot metal had been poured, he being five years old at the time.

Mr. Curtis also said that his father used to set him a "stent," to be done at noon between school hours. Furthermore, Mr. Curtis said that of the only two whippings of his boyhood, one was inflicted for throwing

some of his unfinished work under the bench, thus making it appear that he had done more than he had really accomplished.

Perhaps it may not be out of the way to say just here that the second and last castigation was for letting his sister drive the cattle home instead of doing it himself, as he had been told to do.

One wonders what would be the effect of such training on the five-year-olds of this decade. That or something else made a successful man of William Curtis. His bodily vigor was remarkable. He was seen at the age of seventy-six to ascend a tall ladder, and, what is quite as much to the purpose, to get down again without difficulty.

All the work of making the buttons was done by Amos Curtis and his children in his own house. Peddlers took them, as they did most kinds of merchandise, all over the country.

One individual who owed Mr. Curtis a moderate sum paid him with a tract of two hundred acres of land in the vicinity of the present city of Cleveland. Mr. Curtis was not satisfied with this payment, as he considered it only a little better than nothing, and at an opportunity disposed of it. From a creditor nearer home he received a yoke of cattle in payment of a debt.

When Mr. William Curtis was about seventy years old he unearthed from his garden the same knife-shaped tool with which, when five years old, he used to remove the molded buttons from their constructive frame. Mr. Curtis valued the article as a relic very highly.

In September, 1892, the Meriden *Journal* stated that something was to be—or not to be—done to the “Boneville” bridge, a lonely nook at the southern part of this town where it would seem that no manufacturing

interest could ever have had a place, and yet for more than thirty years it was noisy with the whir of machinery, and busy with the events of birth, life and death.

As most of the circumstances of living are the outcome of beginnings that have apparently nothing in common with final results, so it was here.

In the early twenties, the most direct road from Meriden to Cheshire lay over the steep hill directly west of Hanover village, or South Meriden. After the long ascent was gained, an abrupt descent led by a circuitous route through the hamlet called Hough's Mills, and from thence, after crossing the river twice, to Cheshire street.

It must have been about 1828 that a movement was made to open a new and more direct route between the towns. This road was to pass northward of the Quinnipiac, and it would give more direct access to the farms lying upon that side of the river.

For some reason forgotten now, but thought potent enough at the time, the project was opposed with a good deal of cross-grained maliciousness by the farmers of the vicinity. The most influential man among them effectually put a stop to the plan by investing his money in a factory and dwelling house upon the only available space between the high bluff on one side and the river on the other.

The spot was a beautifully romantic one then, but the old bridge which led to it was torn down and the course of the highway changed long ago, and it is impossible to give in words, and idle to attempt to convey, any idea of it.

The making of wooden pocket combs was the first business venture there, but the making of bone buttons soon took its place, hence the name of "Boneville."

That given in joke has clung to the locality more or less ever since.

For a number of years button making was a prosperous business, employing many young women, who were boarded either in Mr. Griswold's, the proprietor's own family, or at a private house near by.

The prospect of a new road to Cheshire street, which should go around the hill instead of over it, had not been forgotten, and about the year 1847 what is known as the "Oregon" road was begun.

The name of Oregon was first given by Luther Webb and William Rice, so wild and then almost inaccessible was the region. The boys had been exploring, as boys love to do, and being questioned as to where they had been, replied that they had "been to Oregon." Afterward the name was taken up by the workmen employed there by the Meriden Cutlery Company on a reservoir and dam since abandoned. It became a local title in common use.

A business man from Greenfield, Mass., who inquired for Mr. J. C. Breckenridge, looked thunderstruck when told by the heedless interlocutor that Mr. Breckenridge had "gone to Oregon." Of course an explanation speedily followed.

The rocky cliff on the south side of the river descended steeply and directly to the river side, and to make room for the new roadway a good deal of blasting was necessary. A large stone thrown across the ravine crashed through a window of the button factory and instantly killed a young woman who sat there engaged in her usual work. After this misfortune others followed.

The situation of the dwelling house, set as it was against the face of the cliff, was as unhygienic as it possibly could have been, if that had been the object

in putting it there, and illness and death were frequent in the family of those residing there; this house being rented by the proprietor of the factory. Finally, the death of his wife seemed to destroy his ambition, and his failure in business put an end to the button industry, so far as one knows, in Meriden.

Various unsuccessful attempts were afterwards made to establish some kind of hardware business there, the last one by a Mr. Osgood.

In 1860 the factory was burned down. Not long after that sundry improvements by the cutlery company covered the foundations with water, and finally obliterated every trace of them, and the building of the Meriden & Waterbury Railroad, that passes over the spot, took up most of the rocky face of the cliff.

Once lovers met there; marriage vows had been pledged there; fair babies were taken into loving arms; and there a young mother was taken from her little children, and left her husband to a grief that never was comforted in this world. And save for this record, not a trace is left of it all.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### BROAD STREET; ITS ORCHARDS AND FLOWERS.

THE often quoted Mrs. Sally Bradley, whose mind and memory were unimpaired at the time of her death at a great age, is my authority for any memories anterior to 1834. One has a misgiving that this is a repetition, but age is garrulous.

Mrs. Bradley told the writer that the ravine south of Charles Parker's residence, Broad street, was, in her young days—that is to say, in 1789, perhaps—called Nabb's Folly, because somebody of the name had tried and failed to make a road across it.

Now—in 1899—this ravine is upon the east side quite filled up, on the west side nearly so.

The permanent filling up of the uncommonly deep chasm, through which ran a rapid, never-failing but narrow stream of water, was supposed to be as nearly impassable as was the making of a solid way over or through the treacherous, quaking green morass called at that time the “Old Fly,” but since known disastrously as the “Peat Works,” for when the New Haven & Hartford Railroad corporation surveyed for their narrow one-track road, it was said that the “Old Fly” was a bottomless quagmire that could never be filled in or made safe, no matter what was done there.

However, the turnpike people filled up the ravine sufficiently to make a narrow road across it, and, on the whole, a safe one, although for a great many years heavy rains and snows would cause ominous crevices where the causeway met the steep slopes at the sides of the “Gulf,” as it was locally termed.

In 1833 the street was, as it is now, pretty straight, but its width was a very uncertain quantity, and its level of a varied "up and downedness."

For instance, the now beautifully graded grounds upon North Broad street, between Camp and Pratt streets, were then alternately a high, steep, caved-in bank overhanging the road, topped by a dilapidated Virginia rail fence, which was kept from going altogether to pieces by the attraction of cohesion probably, and at the head of Camp street was a deep defile in which grew several large butternut trees. The nuts from these trees used to lie upon the ground ungathered all through the winter, so plentiful were they.

Sometimes, indeed, a frugally-minded youth gathered them, and the equally plentiful walnuts and chestnuts, and sold them in the only markets at Hartford or New Haven, borrowing, or oftener than not hiring, his father's horse and wagon to convey them there. He would sell them for a price varying from twenty-five to fifty cents a bushel, calling himself most successful if the latter price was received.

The interspace between Camp street and the "Gulf," now built up with handsome residences, was a thick wood of great hickory, chestnut and oak trees, with a dense undergrowth of low-growing trees and bushes, in which was black birch of piquant flavor, not often sought for, as black snakes and adders lurked there.

It does not seem so very long ago that a flat-headed adder was seen apparently asleep on the south side of the gulf. South of this point, the road on the west side, for a good many rods, was fenced by a low stone wall, its ruggedness softened by a hedge of tall evening primroses, such as one verily believes never grew anywhere else.

Do any children now know the fun of watching the perfected primrose buds open at the touch of a finger. To be sure, one must go far afield to find the primroses.

The ground now covered by the sidewalk and green-sward between the Congregational Church and Charles street was the dumping ground for huge piles of tin chips, which accumulated rapidly with the conscientious methods of manufacture then used. The heaps of glittering refuse were embedded in an exceedingly luxuriant growth of wild parsley, known to the children as "poison fennel."

The green (it really was one in those days) in front of the churches was a parade ground for a flock of geese, reinforced not infrequently by a pig or two or a few stray cows. Their presence never seemed to worry anybody. Likely as not they were the property of some town official.

But on the first Wednesday in May and the three succeeding days, the green was enlivened in a different manner. Upon those days did the apprentices at the various tinware shops, whose prerogative it was to have a half-week holiday at "election" time, with everybody else that felt like it, seriously and with great decorum play ball. There is no doubt they enjoyed it mightily, but they made it appear a very solemn function.

Just at the crossing of East Main and Broad streets stood a tall post, from which hung a large, square sign. On one side was depicted a rather robust and florid young woman altogether too thinly clad. She pointed, with an amiable expression, to a miraculous cornucopia of about a peck basket capacity, from which issued a bushel or two of incongruous fruits and vegetables. This was supposed to represent Pomona, the goddess of plenty.

The poor thing swung there until time and the wear and tear of the seasons obliterated her bloom; the cornucopia was only a blotch of yellow paint, and of its multifarious contents no trace remained. The iron watering trough stands upon the spot over which for so many years the old tavern sign hung.

One cannot be quite certain, but it was probably in the summer of 1835 that a circus was allowed to exhibit in Meriden. Very grave and severe were the criticisms upon the reckless conduct of the selectmen in allowing anything so wicked and demoralizing. Usually a circus passed through the town in the night, leaving no trace but the tracks of the solitary elephant—never more than one—in the dewy road. The children thought it very exciting to find the tracks in the road. In this case, the circus being permitted to stop, a tent about as large as a good-sized room was pitched close to the sign post.

Well-brought-up children, particularly little girls, were hardly permitted to look upon the outside of the canvas. Under certain restrictions we might feast our eyes upon the sight of one scrawny camel and the despondent elephant that were the processional features of the show, they being natural history, and therefore instructive.

Some time in this summer Mrs. Samuel Lester gave a party for her little sister at Broad street, in the house occupied for many years by the Rev. Harvey Miller of fragrant memory. A dozen little girls, most of them in pink or white cambric dresses, white stockings and slippers, crossed over the instep by narrow black ribbons tied around the ankle, and pantalets reaching to the heels of their slippers, all of them with bare necks and arms, were at the house by two in the afternoon.

The leading feature of the festivity was the waiting for the advent of the New York stage. All in a row and "taking hold of hands," at the proper moment the young revelers dropped a simultaneous curtsy.

The very evident appreciation of the occupants of the vehicle was highly gratifying. One may as well add that the "boys" came about six o'clock, and all went home at eight. Observe that this was in the summer time.

Broad street is beautiful for situation, and destined to become more beautiful in the coming years. But in the springs and summers of those bygone years it was beautiful exceedingly. The gigantic cherry trees which environed and overtopped every house, also planted in rows by the roadside, were tall pyramids of snowy bloom.

Every house had a small orchard of choice apple trees. Peach trees were common, and plum trees were abundant. Purple and white lilacs and white roses, the old-fashioned sort, single and fragrant, were in every door-yard. A white lilac with twisted stem can be seen now on the north side of Edmund Wilcox's, Broad street, which was set there by Mrs. Sally Bradley in 1836. Others on Broad street have stood for sixty years.

One cannot forbear recalling two or three lovely gardens of the olden time. One of them, at the head of Broad street, was surrounded by a low terrace or offset, veiled and curtained by the soft green of pot-moss. Fragrant yellow lilies grew there. The heavy-headed crimson peonies, the tall spikes of purple foxgloves, the blue Canterbury bells, clumps of low growing Scotch roses, which were tiny red roses an inch in diameter, set closely on stems a foot high. The Scotch roses and pot-moss went out together. Nobody sees either now.

And the other garden, with plats of the rosy flush of May pinks and great mounds of spicy June pinks and rows of tall white lilies. And still another one farther down the street, with roses and lilies and beds of thyme, and summer savory and sweet clover and beebalm. These gardens are not. No fragrance of herb or rose or lily lingers. Long ago the hands that tended them laid down "their busy work for evermore." And the kindly eyes that watched them are closed here to open upon the lilies of paradise years ago as we reckon time, but for them it may be "the wonder is not yet gone out of their eyes."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### SOME OLD HOUSES AND BRIDGES.

IT is only an echo of a very far away time, but the frequently quoted old lady was often heard to say, that "when she was a girl, all south of what is now East Main street was thick woods and pasture fields." The woods were so thick that when the cows were turned in there one of them always wore a bell.

"In the summer the milking was done at the bars."

These bars were just west of the Center Congregational church, almost exactly opposite the head of Center street. Mrs. Bradley also said that the hillside north of East Main street, from Broad street down to Pratt street, was heavily wooded with "great trees of the first growth, with a good many white wood (tulip) trees among them. They used to look very handsome when they were all in blossom," as may very well be imagined.

In 1835 a little girl was sitting on the front "stoop" of one of the four dwelling houses—the only four on the south side of East Main street. This was then a steep road that fell in nearly perpendicular patches, alternated with short, abrupt dips or hollows that held water, and were reservoirs of mud even when the rest of the road was perfectly dry. This little girl propounded the question if "anybody supposed there would ever be any streets over there?"

"Over there" meant the area between East Main street and Britannia street, Colony street and Broad street (known then as the "Turnpike,") the "Old

Road" and the "road down to the Corner," all comprised "over there."

The misprophetic answer was: "It is possible, my dear, but not very probable."

Yet the respondent lived long enough to see at least half a dozen streets opened and more or less built up. There were, in 1834, only five houses on the north side of East Main street. In the first of these there lived and died a gentle young widow, who faced the world bravely in behalf of her little son and four baby daughters. This house has been moved a little north of the original site and is in good repair.

The next was the Mecorney house, and stands in its old place. It is No. 194 East Main street. The third was removed to make room for the Town Hall and Norwood street. "This was the Captain Cowles place," now No. 25 Twiss street. Here was another old-fashioned garden—a delight to the eyes of two little maidens, who used to gaze laughingly through the fence and make every excuse their small brains could invent to get inside.

Four or five splendid old maples were destroyed when the house was removed. An ancient house called the "Cornelius Hull place" was moved to make a site for St. Andrew's Church.

Another row of fine maple trees were sacrificed at that time. This house, one of the oldest in the city is now (1899) in excellent repair as No. 69 Miller street. It will scarcely be credited, but it is true, that so steep was the descent of the road from the junction of Catlin and Liberty streets, that a child standing at that point could not see the roof of a tiny house that stood where No. 104 East Main street now stands. This house was the birthplace and for many years the

home of Edward Lawrence, an eccentric imbecile, whose presence used to be a familiar one in the city, but whose poor scatter-brain has been quiet in the grave for many years. This house is also still standing in fairly good repair not far from its original site.

From a point near Willow street a road diverged, leading over a knoll into South Colony street. The apex of this knoll was just at the point where the Main Street Baptist church now stands. The ground descended sharply from the roadside into a bog, considered so hopeless that an amputated limb was buried there, the spot being thought not likely ever to be disturbed. When this limb was, many years after, disinterred, it was for a while thought very mysterious and, perhaps, tragical.

The building of the Meriden Bank, the Meriden Daily *Journal*, the Meriden *Republican*, the City Mission and other adjacent buildings stand where once was this marsh. Veteran and Crown streets also traverse it. East Main street, from Pratt street to Hanover street, was a narrow highway through a quagmire, guarded on each side by pollard willows, which were cut every year. Nobody ever even tried to walk on the south side of the narrow roadway, and there was not enough for a footpath on the north side.

The hapless pedestrian who made a misstep could only flounder about in a morass composed of about equal parts of black, sticky mud and water, tin chips, sweet flag and alder bushes. Harbor Brook ran across the road. It was bright, clear, rippling and pure, too, as any country stream need be.

No country road can show a bridge so tumble-down and unsightly as was the one that spanned the stream on the only thoroughfare between "uptown" and "downtown."

The other bridge over Colony street, a few rods south of it was its twin. In the spring, when the frost was coming out of the ground, the road for some distance at the east end of the bridge, and for a little way at the west end, was well nigh impassable.

In the spring of 1836 a little girl standing at the window of a dwelling house, where Palace block now is, saw a Yale student drive rather precipitately off the west end of the bridge with his father's horse and wagon. It should be noted that a carriage, as we now understand the term, was not then to be thought of. He had successfully piloted his way through the slough. He may have thought all danger over, for he drove rapidly and with an air over the bridge, only to find himself sitting very upright in the stationary vehicle, with reins in his hands and the mud up to the wheel hubs, while the liberated steed, with the rest of the harness trailing at his heels, was laboriously plucking his mud begrimed legs step by step from the sticky bog, nor paused until he had gained the short, steep ascent where the streets crossed. The mud was deepest just where the railroad track is now.

One recalls, also, a certain day when the surveyors were engaged in the preliminary work of the railroad. Rubber boots were in the future, and Mr. Brodhead, the surveyor, who was just a least bit of a dandy in his dress, always wore what was not as common then as now, very conspicuous linen wristbands. On this particular morning he stood, with the wide cuffs on his wrists and enormous leather boots on his legs, shouting orders to his assistants. Evidently he was very cross, for not getting an answer to a question he, with divers unquotable expletives, desired to know if the "fellow was deaf."

The offender, who had been absorbed in executing sundry gymnastic performances, at last yelled something in response, in which naughty words and "snake" bore a part, at the same time lifting a long, squirming black snake and throwing it to a distance. Not beyond the swamp, though, for to have done that he must have thrown it beyond Pratt street.

The often-quoted dear old lady was also at divers times interviewed as to the legend of the Regicides and their hiding under the bridge at Harbor Brook, while their pursuers were passing over it on horseback. Her answers never differed very much from this formula:

"It seems to be the fashion not to believe it, but it might have been true easily enough, for it was all a swamp, and the trees and alder bushes grew so close to the bridge and all around it; and when I was a girl we all believed it. Everybody did."

Speaking of the Regicides, one is reminded of the story that, while the fugitives were hiding in the Judge's Cave, rather mythically located upon East Rock in New Haven, it was said a lady in white used to be seen daily, very early in the morning, descending the declivity, always in white, and at a certain point finding a basket of (it is to be hoped) comfortable things waiting for her.

This continued to be done for the space of two years, if one may believe the legend. How the mysterious female contrived to live in a cave and dress in white gowns is a problem which the modern daughters of Eve would be extremely pleased to have solved for them.

But, of course, all that has nothing to do with East Main street in Meriden.

Very singular it is that while the men of each generation are so diverse in their characteristics, the small

boy remains the same in all generations. We remember that King David when a boy was severely snubbed and sat down upon by his big brother (who, of course, knew how it was himself) for presumably running after the soldiers. To be sure it was not at all as the big brother supposed or, at least, pretended to think, and the outcome of the affair, it is recorded, was extremely creditable to the embryo potentate. The moral of which is that if the small boy will mind his father and make good use of his hands, he will be apt to make a very good hit and strike a big thing sooner or later, one way or another.

This leads up to the statement that the boys of the last century were very like the boys of the present one

The writer remembers her uncle, Dr. Isaac I. Hough, and Capt. Lyman Collins, the father of Aaron Lyman Collins and Charles Hinsdale Collins, as two portly elderly gentlemen of leisure. It was reported that they were once seen to occupy between them seven chairs. The two old gentlemen were nearly of an age. Their homes, in the center of the town, were near each other. They were from early boyhood intimate friends, and their graves, in the Broad street cemetery, are only a few feet apart.

Somewhere about 1797 General George Washington, making a journey through New England, spent with his attending gentlemen one night at a tavern in Wallingford, where they were "made very comfortable." "In the morning they rode up the Old Colony road." They must have passed the old "Dugway" cut in the steep side of a hill long since leveled, and on up South Colony street.

The distinguished company must have crossed the

bridge at the junction of South Colony and Hanover streets, and then passed up Colony street.

For the ancient lady so often quoted told the writer that when Dr. Hough and Capt. Collins were boys, perhaps ten or twelve years old, they ran all the way from the Center to the Corner and saw, with their own eager, boyish eyes the great man in the flesh.

"He looked exactly like his pictures, and there were several gentlemen with them, and they were all on horseback."

And being boys, doubtless they ran after him up Colony street. It used to be said that the party called for a glass of water at the house once the residence of Deacon Walter Booth, since removed to make room for E. J. Doolittle's house, No. 285 Colony street.

As General Washington and his suite passed up the road, no doubt he looked across toward the Hanging Hills. Did he know that his features were clearly (more clearly then than now) outlined in the rocks? Maybe somebody told him. I wish we knew. Ah, me! how very much we might learn if dead lips could only speak.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATION AT ST. ANDREW'S.

In the very first years of the existence of St. Andrew's as a parish the yearly Christmas "illumination," as it was then called, was with tallow candles. Wooden frames to fit the windows were so arranged that a candle was at each window pane. These panes were about seven by nine inches, and probably thirty panes to a window. The frames were carefully kept from year to year to be produced and used at the proper time. A chandelier of tin, precariously suspended from the arched ceiling in the center of the church, and side lights of tin fastened to the posts which supported the galleries, held the inevitable tallow candles.

All of these that were accessible were duly visited once in a half hour or so by some one armed with the "snuffers." The inaccessible lights had to be left with toppling wicks to drip tallow onto whomsoever it might fall. The last illumination was in 1833 or 1834.

About 1830 one William Lawrence of Meriden invented a hanging oil lamp to be used in public buildings. This lamp he patented. It was hailed as a success, and they were soon put into use in each of the three churches.

These lamps put the yearly church candle lighting out of the way forever. Until the later years of the century the festival of Christmas was only observed by the small congregation that worshiped at St. Andrew's Episcopal church. Except, that persons from the other two denominations would attend there upon Christmas eve to hear the music.

The little church was always crowded on these occasions, as their annual recurrence was the one musical event of the year. The St. Andrew's of 1840 was a tiny, white wooden building on the southeast corner of the old cemetery on Broad street.

There were youths and maidens then as there are now in these days, and they also had energy and ingenuity according to their lights. We of St. Andrew's were very proud of certain achievements of the previous summer, notably outside blinds and matting at the only door. Vestibule there was none. Some of the younger members had each paid for one blind, a few of the older people also assisting.

Certainly the cool green light was a vast improvement over the glare of the before shadeless windows. Christmas of 1840 was at hand, and after the successes of the summer we felt that much was expected of us in the way of decorations, and in the manner herein set forth did we proceed to realize those expectations. Material was plenty enough. We could have a forest of hemlock for the asking. So we began by setting a pretty large tree in the middle of the building, much to the curtailment of its scanty seating capacity, and no doubt to the discomfort of the occupants of the adjacent "slips."

To balance the center, a big hemlock was put in each of the four corners down stairs and in the galleries. The fronts of the latter were festooned by thin and ragged looking wreaths made of small twigs of hemlock tied together. Our next move was suggested by an ingenious young girl, who is at this present writing Mrs Marietta Pettee, the wife of the Rev. John T. Pettee. She originated the idea of simulating snow on the branches of our big trees by tying bunches of cotton

batting on them. As we were nearly frozen in church every Sunday of our lives in the winter, this further suggestion of frigidity was certainly superfluous.

Our sense of the fitness of things must have been in abeyance, for our next step in this renaissance of decorative art was to introduce a tropical element. In those days eggs, although not as plenty as hemlock trees, were by no means forty cents a dozen as they are at this writing. Ten cents was thought a sufficient price. It was not difficult to get a half bushel or so of egg shells, which, dipped in yellow wax and fastened to boughs of laurel, surmounting the square parts that upheld the galleries, might, by making believe a good deal like Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, pass for lemon trees bearing fruit.

Being serenely assured in our own minds that the whole affair so far was an immense success, we were unanimous in deciding that an emblem was needed for the perfection of the design, and here arose the first discord in the harmony of our æsthetic efforts.

We had chosen a star as the most appropriate, but we were divided in opinion as to its location. One set asserted that, as the wise men were themselves in the East when they saw the star it must have been shining in the western sky, and therefore the proper place for our emblem was at the west end of the church over the pulpit.

Besides (and this made the east-enders waver), if the star was hung over the pulpit and opposite the door it could at once be seen by every one upon entering. Whereas, if placed at the east end over the singers' seats, it could only be viewed by turning around.

We all felt that there was a great deal in that; but then others equally logical maintained that, as the

wise men said they saw the star in the east, why, of course, the star was in the east, or how could they have seen it there.

I have forgotten who decided the matter for us; but finally the luminary was hung over the choir. I am sorry to say the effect was very disappointing. Gold leaf was not procurable by us. No wayfaring man but a fool could have mistaken our star for anything but paper. Another thing, it was all it could do to swing around and present its thin edge to the beholders, if there were any.

But our intentions were good we knew, and accidents happen to the best of people, as we also knew. Our work was done, the aisles swept, an easy thing to do comparatively, for they were carpetless. Indeed, so were most of the slips, and cushionless as well. The lamps were washed and newly filled with whale oil. Mrs. Edwin Curtis' best pair of glass lamps were placed one on each side of the pulpit cushion. The fire (there was but one) of wood in a box stove by the door ready to light, and the house was given over to silence for a few hours.

At six o'clock the door was opened again and the church lighted. It was then the custom in all the churches that the south galleries should be set apart exclusively for the young men and boys. It was on this Christmas Eve that a number of them sat in the gallery with their hats on.

An elderly and eccentric English lady, called by the young people Mrs. "Posie" Andrews, because she cultivated with her own hands a rather prolific and very irregular flower garden, observing this irreverence, shocking to her English prejudices, arose in the body of the church just before service, and with an air of giving

a piece of information, told the violators of good manners and tradition that "*gentlemen* always removed their hats in the house of God."

Every masculine head was immediately uncovered. As this Christmas Eve was to be a memorable occasion, the ladies of the choir wore white dresses, with wreaths on their heads—a very daring innovation it was thought. Some of those wreaths were made of artificial flowers, some of white everlastings.

The singing at St. Andrew's was very good always, but was especially so on Christmas Eve. Edwin Curtis led the singing and played the bass viol. He also kept the key of the church, made the fire, swept the building, kept the oil lamps in order and boarded the minister. In the choir he was reinforced by Henry Saltonstall and Alanson Curtis, who each played the violin. Henry Judd and A. H. Curtis, formerly of the Savings Bank, and a Mr. Ford, each played the flute.

Mr Ford is only remembered as a transient person, whose hair and complexion were blond, who always dressed in light-colored garments, and whose flute was an ivory one. On the whole, he was considered more ornamental than useful in the choir.

I cannot recollect the music sung, but I know the grand old "*Gloria in Excelsis*" in plain chant was not omitted. At that time it was always sung after the reading of the psalms in the evening service.

Down in the congregation dear old Amos Curtis, who had been himself once a leader in the choir, fairly sung himself out into the aisle.

He was one of the first of the family to connect himself with St. Andrew's, and the first to organize the choir, and the fruit of his labors have followed through several generations. For about eighty years from his

day to this some who bear his name have been found doing their duty in the choir of St. Andrew's. He brought weekly in that early day the beginners in music to his house, and after "trying their tones," instituted a course of instruction for their benefit—Edwin Curtis and Mrs. Ann Merriam, her brother Joel, the elder Lillets and others. The change which he lived to see, from the pitch pipe to the gilded pipe organ, might well arouse an enthusiasm airy enough to raise him off his feet.

Hezekiah Rice stood up, tall and stately and reverent. He was a staunch Universalist, but he loved the Episcopal liturgy.

Saintly Esquire Merriam, Elisha Curtis, who dearly loved the Lord's house, the fathers and brothers and cousins of the Andrews family, the brothers and cousins and neighbors of the then numerous Curtis family and others whom I cannot name were there.

And then when the sermon was preached and the closing anthem sung, and the stillness of the quiet prayer, which followed the benediction, broken, we all went our ways, in the middle of the road mostly, for sidewalks there were none. That was long ago. The violins and flutes were tuneless years ago.

Those who handled them so deftly and those who listened and admired have long ago "Beheld the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off." The old church is now a tenement house on Liberty street. Here and there in the city of Meriden, in this year 1899 you may still find a few elderly ladies who will smile as they recall that faraway time. It was a very good time, that of their youth, but they do not disparage the present. Some of them keep something of their tunefulness of voice and brightness of eye. And they have not lost all of their elasticity of spirits.

They will not tell you that "the former times were better than these;" they are very content with the present, and so they will be with the future as it glides into the present and fades into the past, until to those who are now in the very morning of life the present has become to them in their turn the past of the Long Ago.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### CHURCH CHOIRS—THE TIBBALS PROPERTY.

THE only buildings between East Main and Olive streets in 1840 were the three churehes. The Baptist Church on the northwest corner of the Broad street cemetery was a plain white structure, surmounted by a steeple, but without a bell. It was entered by two doors at the head of a flight of six or seven wooden steps. These doors opened into a lobby, from which, at each side of the gallery, stairs ascended. The door and stairs on the south side were used exclusively by the young men and boys for entering their special domain—the south gallery.

The arrangement of the interior of the church was exceedingly plain. The ceiling overhead was flat and comparatively low. As the singers' gallery was spacious, it might have been to relieve this flatness of the ceiling that the architect had put an inverted bowl-shaped arch over the choir.

This disregard of acoustics had, of course, the effect of carrying the sound away from the body of the church, and the singing, therefore, was heard to better advantage from the seats back of the choir than from the audience room. This dome-like ceiling was afterwards flattened and lowered, and the change was a decided improvement. The Sunday singing was conducted in the usual way. Curtains were drawn, partially concealing the choir as they stood. These curtains were green. Then came the prolonged note giving the key, and rising of the choir after sounding it.

At one time the resident minister, either Mr. Hervey or Mr. Howard, led the singing from the pulpit, and succeeded very well indeed. Afterward, Joel Miller became the choir leader, and for a good many years filled the place most acceptably.

In instrumental aid the Baptist Church choir was very fortunate. Samuel Yale—called by his friends “Uncle Sam,” and by his enemies “Old Sam”—was conceded by both friends and enemies to be “queer.” He was not in the very least a religious man, but he went to meeting pretty regularly and played the bass viol, and did it very well.

Sundays and week days his costume was always the same. Always a green baize or woolen roundabout jacket, his neck encircled by a very ragged and very dirty black satin stock. His headgear sometimes an old woolen slouch hat. At other times, for a touch of elegance, the cap was left off in favor of a very tall-crowned, stiff black hat, narrow and old-fashioned even in that day. The fate of this remarkable hat may as well be recorded here. Somebody set a lighted candle too near, quite under the brim, and this peculiar piece of headgear shriveled up and disappeared. The ragged black satin stock he wore to bed in his last sickness, and died with it on his neck.

Although he was one of the richest men in town, in this rig he went to meeting, and for his own pleasure played the bass viol, or he would not have done it.

“Captain” Howard played the double bass viol. He was another character. His full name was Horatio Nelson Howard. The owner of this big name was a very short, rotund Englishman who had drifted to Meriden. Nobody ever knew much about him.

When he first came he must have had some money,

for he owned at one time and, perhaps, he built the tall, narrow house near the Parker factory gate on High street. A very good house it was then considered to be.

Sometime or other Captain Howard had been a gentleman. Perhaps strong drink had brought him down. It proved to be the final ruin of him.

The late Mrs. Bell, as Emily Avery, was for many years the leading soprano, Sarah Ives the leading alto. She left the choir when she became the wife of the Rev. Harvey Miller. Mrs. Miller's singing voice was sweet and sympathetic. She had very beautiful eyes, singularly serene and restful in their expression.

Ira Twiss was also prominent in the choir. He entered into musical matters with the greatest zeal, and his evident delight in singing went far to compensate for his somewhat monotonous tenor.

Late in the forties the Baptist Church was sold to the "Meriden Academical Association." They floored the space between the galleries, thus making a second story. The choir seats were not altered, nor were the old gallery seats. The upper room, formed by the division, was rented as a hall. For a considerable time it was the only public hall in town, the old tavern ball-room having become disused. The lower room was the academy school room. The society of Odd Fellows used the hall for their meetings. St. Andrew's parish, pending the building of their stone church on Broad street, rented the hall for Sunday services. In 1849, Rev. A. N. Littlejohn preached in it for ten months. He is now bishop of the diocese of Long Island.

The building was finally sold, and moved and made into a four-tenement house on Twiss street, where it

now stands. The ground which it occupied was taken into Charles street, and a slight depression, still visible on the side by the cemetery indicates the site of another vanished landmark. The old Tibbals house, of which an engraving is now the only vestige, insignificant as it appears, was once a dwelling-house of some pretension and of some note in the history of the town. Situated closely under the shadow of the Center Congregational Church, it was, nevertheless, once several feet above the level of the street. A wide covered porch, supported by pillars, projected from the front door, with seats on each side. Large cherry trees shaded it on the street side.

The house was built about 1794-'96 by Samuel Tibbals. He came from Milford. He was a man of property, a widower, between forty and fifty years of age. Soon after his advent into the town he married Chloe, the eldest (living) daughter of Dr. Hough. She was sixteen years old.

Mr. Tibbals bought nearly or quite all the lands between East Main and Charles streets, and between Broad and High streets. The Tibbals house was peculiar in this respect: It was never regularly bought or sold; it never changed ownership by actual purchase. This is a fact, unless the writer is mistaken, and in this matter a mistake is not admitted.

When Mr. Tibbals left Meriden for the far, far West, Ohio, the house by some exchange passed into the hands of his father in-law, Dr. Hough, and at the doctor's death became by will the property of his son, Dr. Isaac I. Hough, in whose ownership it remained for many years. It was occupied for the greater part of those years by Dr. Hough's near relatives, and when for a few years these persons left the house, it was tenanted

by some of his more distant connections. Dr. Hough had some peculiar notions about the devising of property by will, and selected his nephew and namesake, Isaac I. Tibbals as his heir, who therefore at the death of Dr. Hough became the owner.

After the death of Isaac Tibbals' first wife, Lucy Cowles (who was also his cousin), Mr. Tibbals married Mary, the eldest daughter of General, or, as he was later known, Deacon Booth. After her death the house by some transfer of interests became the property of Deacon Booth, who in his turn gave it by will to the Center Congregational Society.

Mr. Tibbals was a devout and active Episcopalian. At the time of his advent into Meriden the Episcopal Church was only represented by half a dozen families, among whom the Andrews family was the most prominent. This family was English, and at the time of the Revolution were strong Royalists.

An ancient maiden lady, Miss Lucy Andrews, used to tell the writer, getting much excited in the telling, that her grandfather, being a Tory, was not allowed by the authorities to go beyond the limits of his own land, the greater part of which lay south of West Main street and west of the present Meriden & Waterbury Railroad, which now traverses part of the old farm.

The Andrews family were very well off, and were, almost as a matter of course, with their peculiar political views, Church of England people.

The only Episcopal services in town were held at their house, and were only occasional. Into this small society Mr. Tibbals was naturally made very welcome. He brought some money and more enthusiasm, and at once interested himself in the building of the first Episcopal Church. Some of Dr. Hough's family became,

through Mr. Tibbals' influence, members of the society, some of the numerous Curtis family joined, and St. Andrew's Church was fairly started.

The old dwelling we have been talking of was known and spoken of by the old inhabitants as the "Tibbals house." It is a mere waste of words to try to speak of the house and its environs, as they were so long ago; to tell of the abundant fruit trees which shaded it, and the flower garden, divided by a rivulet flowing from across the road into the meadows on the other side. The source of this brook was an ever-living spring, which still supplies with drinking water the house occupied by Mrs. Lyman Butler, No. 458 Broad street.

It is now not possible to see how the house could have stood so high above the level of the street. Yet so it was once. After its decadence a visit was made to the old building. A forlorn hope had been cherished that an old carved cupboard that had stood in the corner of the basement kitchen might have escaped the ravages of irresponsible tenants. Needless to say such hope was futile. This had disappeared, as had also the old partitions that formed the passage-way of the cellar leading past the dark fruit cellar, and the cellar where the charcoal was stored in great bins, and the other cellar where the cider barrels and the vinegar barrels and the winter's supply of salted meats were kept, and which passage led finally into the light, cheerful kitchen, with its wide fireplace and deep, brick oven, wherein had been baked to toothsome perfection the great loaves of daily bread, the rich loaves of wedding cake, and more than once or twice funeral baked meats.

All were gone, as completely as the flower garden with its rivulet and narrow footbridge of years before. Instead of the doorsill over which one stepped into the

once bright house place, one went down into a great open cellar. Not one board left to mark the old outlines, and the cellar itself a yard deep in debris of all kinds.

The old house, which more than any other save one had to do with the early history of St. Andrew's parish, became at last equally identified with the interests of the Center Congregational Church. The old house is gone, and the smooth grade of the green turf where it stood gives no sign of its old-time existence.

The old well-sweep that the old-time thirsty school children drew down with upstretched arms to send the buckets splashing into the depths is not even remembered. The well itself was for awhile disused, but has been recovered, and the clear, cool water flows from the same source as it did a century and more ago. It is now (in 1899) carefully guarded.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE FIRST TAVERN — WINTER EXPERIENCES.

IN 1779, the turnpike not yet opened, the most traveled road between Wallingford and Meriden passed through Ann and Curtis streets. Old people described Curtis street as "twisting about a good deal." Its lines led up to the door of the old Curtis homestead, standing some way east of the present line. At the present junction of Broad and Curtis streets the road turned abruptly toward the west, making at that point a sort of square. At the southwest corner of this open space there stood a large two-story farm-house. This was really the first tavern in the town, and, of course, the only one until the old "Half-Way House" was occupied. In an "L," on the south side, was a country store. In this store could be found all the luxuries demanded by the primitive style of housekeeping. Among these luxurious necessities, or necessary luxuries, were always West India sugar, molasses and spices, and always New England rum. They belonged together, for the rum bought the molasses and spices, the latter unground and unadulterated. When needed for high feasts, such as Thanksgiving (Christmas then did not count at all), ordination dinners or balls, weddings or funerals (to the latter relatives and acquaintances came from afar, and were expected to stay and partake of the funeral baked meats which custom required must be lavishly provided), the brass or iron—sometimes wood or stone—mortar and pestle were brought into use, and, by laborious attrition, the spices were ground to

powder. The children and other superfluous members of the family were expected to take turns at the fragrant drudgery. The very greatest and most important of all social functions was the ordination dinner and the ordination ball that followed the dinner. Both for the dinner and ball a liberal supply of liquors was supposed needful and proper. The last ordination ball given in Meriden was in 1803 when the Rev. Erastus Ripley was ordained. This ball was given in the old tavern ball-room. The last real ordination dinner was given when the Rev. Charles Hinsdale was installed in 1823. This dinner was at his own house, situated on Broad street. At this feast onions held an honorable and conspicuous place, and liquors were so copiously provided that it was whispered a prominent member of society became quite incoherent in conversation. Mrs. Jerusha Plumb was wont to speak with enthusiasm of ordination balls, They were, she said, very serious and stately diversions, and very rigid and formal etiquette was observed, also critical attention must be given to the dancing steps. "Very different from these modern balls," Mrs. Plumb would observe.

Note that Mrs. Plumb's criticism was made in 1840. In the small store before spoken of cotton cloth and calico or "print" could be found in limited quantity. But up to the first ten years of 1800 nearly all textures for common wear were homemade. Linen was used for underclothing; cotton cloth was thought to be extravagant.

In almost every household would be seen the great wheel for spinning wool, the small or flax wheel, with reel which told off with a "click" every fortieth thread wound upon it. Forty threads made a "knot." In most of the farm houses the loom was the most

conspicuous object in the kitchen. The flax grown on the farm was spun and woven into heavy sheeting and table linen, which being once achieved, would last a lifetime and more. Ambitious housewives and daughters sometimes span a finer thread, which, carefully woven in intricate damask patterns, were made into towels and napkins. Some such are still in existence without rent or broken thread. The young woman of (then) marriageable age, from sixteen to twenty, who could card the wool into "handsome rolls," light and fluffy as down as they lay in great piles, and then spin them into "cross-banded" yarn—this was a rare accomplishment—afterward knitting the yarn into Sunday stockings, ornamented with "clocks," was held as a model for her less nimble-fingered sisters.

If, in addition, she could show a "chest of drawers" filled with household linen of her own spinning and weaving, marked with her initials in cross-stitch, she stood proudly forth as a prize to be coveted by the thrifty young farmers designing to settle favorably in life.

Besides the more (or less) direct roads to Wallingford, Westfield or Berlin, there were grass-grown lanes marked by the wheel ruts leading to isolated farms. Well-worn paths led also across the fields and over the hills to the quiet farm houses. In several instances these paths became disputed rights of way, causing family feuds and prolonged lawsuits that lasted for years. It must have taken a good deal of energy and strong nerve to get about in those days. A story was told of a certain "Aunt Griswold," who was notable in her time for efficiency in cases of sudden illness. She was called one winter night to attend a person living on the Westfield road. Taking her infant, wrapped

in a white blanket, she mounted her horse and started. She had not gone far when her horse stumbled in a snowdrift and her babe was thrown from from her arms. The fall in the soft snow did not waken the child, and she looked about for what seemed to her a long time before recovering the little one.

Hilarious tales used to be told of winter night expeditions across the fields to visit the two or three-miles-off neighbors. Upon such unexpected visits or surprise parties the hostess would bring into the kitchen the wheat flour, the sour cream, the eggs and spices, and compound them into twisted cakes. Then, sitting down upon a chair in the chimney corner, she took the cakes from the huge moulding board placed on a chair at her side, and dropped them, one by one, into the kettle of boiling lard suspended from the crane in the fireplace.

The cakes, hot from the frying pan, were washed down by mugs of cider or cups of milk; rows of apples, mellowed upon the hearth before the fire, and the cracking of nuts and the cracking of jokes went on with about equal briskness. After all, this is a world of compensations.

With the turnpike came in new times. Horseback riding withillions, as a common method of traveling, went out, and stages and gigs came in. The old house no longer stood in a corner. Its place was now on the turnpike. It lost its prestige as store and tavern combined. It was for a good many years known as the "Seth Plumb" house. Later it was for an equal number of years spoken of as the "Joel Miller" house. It is now, thanks to its solid timbers, standing in very good condition on South Broad street.

The elegant home of Edward Miller occupies the site of the old store and tavern. The property has been in the possession of only two families for nearly, if not quite, a century.

Liberty street until well into the forties had only two dwelling houses upon it. Both of these are standing upon their original sites, owned and occupied by Walter Hall and William Ridley. Upon the south side of the road the land fell toward the north, and was so cold and wet that no attempt at cultivation was made. It was used exclusively for pasturage.

The whole hillside, from East Main street, between Broad and Camp streets, abounded in living springs, from each of which small but everflowing streams ran through the meadows into Harbor Brook. In the fields traversed by these rivulets grew in their season every wild flower indigenous to New England. Huckleberry bushes were plentiful there, but, alas, snakes were also.

Just where Center street crosses Liberty was a ravine. Abundant nut trees with oaks of a goodly size grew on the banks. A small artificial pond had been made there. This was locally known as "Jordan," it having been used (so tradition had it) in some prehistoric period as a place for baptismal immersion. A stream flowing from this source is known to-day as Jordan Brook.

The pond had been made, in the first place, to propel some crude machinery in two or three little shops. These were cramped little places, not more than eight or ten feet square, and containing nothing more complicated than a few dies and lathes. The water power, such as it was, was not used a great while, but the tiny pond and the trees which shaded it and the snakes

which infested it remained until far into the fifties. In the shops the work was the making of some part of tin lamps. Only two or, at the most, three men were employed. The business was supposed to be profitable, for the principal employé wore boots known to have cost five dollars a pair. He was called—among his friends, of course—a most extravagant person. It was on Liberty street that one of the earliest Meriden manufactures was started. It was here that Samuel Yale set up a forge and made nails by hand, each nail head being separately hammered.

The first Samuel Yale made nails, the second was the owner of the little shops on Liberty street, when the work was finally removed to a large building. One of these shops was lived in for a number of years by Zilpha. She was the widow of a colored dependent of the Yales. Her husband, "Jack" (the two never seemed to have a surname), was the son of slaves, but he being born after a certain date was born free.

He did not leave the Yale family, but continued a faithful servant until his death at the seaside by drowning. The Yale brothers, Samuel and Hiram, grieved for him very sincerely. His wife was given the little building as her home. Here she was made as comfortable as a person of her temperament could be. She spent her whole waking hours in complaining. She wished to be thought an invalid, and did her best as far as she understood her rôle.

She declared she had swallowed a frog, and she evidently thought the circumstance carried with it much distinction. Perhaps she had swallowed a frog, but her personal aversion to water was very marked.

The making of tinware was probably next to nail making, and contemporary with that very likely was

the making of the high back combs, once the extreme of fashion. These combs were—some of them—six or seven inches high, and were cut or carved, not stamped, into fern leaves or roses, with buds and foliage, or oak leaves and acorns, and so on.

Two shops where these were made stood, until 1838, at the present junction of Center and East Main streets. They were finally moved down to the Corner, and for a while stood on posts to keep them out of the water on the north side of East Main street, about opposite Crown street, certainly not far from that.

In those days nothing that would be called machinery was in use. All the processes were slow, but—far from us all be insinuations—the finished products were durable.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### INTERIORS OF THE CHURCHES.

In each of the three Meriden churches the place which answers to the lecture room of this day was then in the basement. The one at the Congregational Church was the most comfortable of them all. For one thing, it was not quite so much underground. The door sill was level with the surrounding yard.

Here for some years—certainly as late as 1846—the town meetings were held. Here might be seen the local politicians standing about the door, with a not infrequent divergence of a large contingent to the old barroom. They returned from there to the basement door to renew with increased zeal and vehemence their weighty arguments.

There was a pulpit or desk in the room, but I do not think it was ever used as such. A large table with several deep drawers served all purposes. In these table drawers were deposited the Sunday school library books, and from it the books were distributed. A box stove in the middle of the room and plenty of wooden benches completed the furnishing.

The Baptist basement had the same general features, only that the entrance to the room was effected by a step from the door. Unless much prevail it caused an unduly abrupt ingress. This peculiarity was once the cause of an unexpected pause in the exercises of the weekly conference meeting. Certain young men (those who remain of them are now sober and grave upholders of law and order) had

lost somehow (at least one of them had) their usual sense of latitude and longitude. It seemed the part of good comradeship to see the unfortunate one safely home, two of the party meanwhile sitting upon the step of the main entrance waiting the return of the other Samaritans.

It occurred to their minds while waiting that it would make a good impression if they attended the prayer meeting. No sooner thought than acted upon, and Deacon Goodrich's exhortation was interrupted by the plunging in on all fours of a couple of bewildered sinners, who were unable to resume a normal position without help. This little affair was a surprise in more senses than one. It opened the eyes to a state of things unsuspected.

The engraving of St. Andrew's Church in Dr. Davis' history is not quite an accurate one. The chimney did not rise from the apex of the roof, but from the northwest corner. The steps were a single flight, and rose directly from the footpath. They were of stone, so rough that to call them hewn is to compliment them. These steps led, as did those of the Baptist Church, up to an unprotected platform before the entrance door. The steps and the walls at the side formed a lobby with an earthen floor, with a door on the south side. Through this lobby was the entrance into a bare, low room of some size. The inevitable box stove, set upon a hearth of bricks occupied the center. The pipe from the stove intersected with another that went the whole length of the room and through the windows, both on the north and south side of the house. This plan had been adopted to obviate the smoking of the stove, which, it is proper to remark, it did not do.

Perhaps owing to the terrible dampness of the place

the smoke and soot condensed, and a black fluid dripped from the joints of the stovepipe onto the floor and benches. Finally, some bright genius caused little tin pails to be hung at every joining of the pipe, and thus, in addition to the box stove and wooden benches, features of the other damp basements, the Episcopalians had a triple row of tin pails overhead.

In all the church buildings the pulpit was at the west end of the auditorium, with the choir opposite over the entrance. In all the three choirs curtains were hung in front of the singers. These were of red moreen, and perhaps eighteen inches in depth.

In all the churches the clergyman was expected to read the metrical psalms and hymns entire given out for singing. While this was being done the curtains were scrupulously drawn together, concealing the singers. Then came the prolonged keynote, given in the first place by the instruments, then in accord with the singers who rose as the sound ceased.

Another similarity in the interior of the church buildings were the slips with doors, which it was thought decorous to open and close at the ingress of the occupants. These doors were fastened by wooden buttons. As may be supposed, there were occasions when the door clapping was much in evidence. As these wooden buttons were on the outer or aisle side, the reaching over of the one at the head to let the rest of the family out was one preliminary of a closing service. He, if an understander of good custom, held the door open until all had passed into the aisle, when, with emphasis, he closed the door and fastened it.

The Baptist and Congregational Churches did not differ materially in their order of public worship, and the general plan of the pulpits and accessories were

much the same. A small plain table below the pulpit, with a curled maple cane-seated chair placed at each end, were the same in both. At the Congregational Church the drapery of the pulpit was the most elaborate and costly of the three, the material being of crimson damask, while the others were obliged to be content with crimson moreen. The singers' seats of the Congregational Church were also enriched with imitation windows, which were draped with red moreen, damask being altogether too costly in those days to be placed back of the congregation.

The ritual of the Episcopal Church, of course, required a more elaborate arrangement. The chancel, with its bare floor, was inclosed by a plain railing, and the narrow, wooden kneeling bench encircling the chancel was also bare of covering. Within the chancel stood the bare table with its two plain chairs. Two or three steps led into the "reading desk" answering to the lecturn of later days. This had two doors, carefully closed when the minister was within. Above this the pulpit was reached by a short flight of stairs upon each side. Those upon the south side were rarely used; never in the author's experience. The minister, leaving the vestry room near the outside entrance under the gallery stairs, walked the whole length of the church and entered the reading desk, fastening the door after him.

When the sermon time came he left the desk, closing the door again. (By the way, the ministers at the other churches also always fastened the pulpit doors upon entering or leaving.) The clergyman leaving the reading desk, traversed the length of the aisle the second time; returning to the vestry, divested himself of his white surplice, and pulling on a voluminous black silk

gown, passed for the third time through the aisle, ascended to the pulpit, where he preached the sermon and in the afternoon read the closing hymn.

Until 1830 the church had a sounding-board suspended over the pulpit. It was thought to be unsafe, and was removed. This sounding-board is still in existence; at present it is "put to base uses." It is hoped it may be recovered and restored to something of its former dignity. A clock in use in the auditorium of this old church is still in existence, and keeping accurate time in the present St. Andrew's parish house.

Of course in those early years there was no thought of chapels or parish houses. Any extra religious services were held in the basements of the churches. The Lenten services at St. Andrew's were invariably held on the mornings of Wednesday and Friday. Rigorous and austere rites were these weekly, morning prayers. There was never any fire, no matter how cold and stormy the day might be.

Edwin Curtis, who managed the parish and all its concerns, considered a fire of a week-day to be a sinful extravagance. But in those days nobody expected to be warm in the cold weather. True, some people lived through it, but it was a case of "the survival of the fittest." The ritual at these morning services was the Morning Prayer and the Litany.

As half the time there was no resident clergyman, it would often be the case that the aged senior warden, Elisha Curtis, would read the morning service and Edwin Curtis make the only audible responses, which he always did in a very loud voice, and with great and (as he went on) increasing rapidity.

Custom severely endorsed St. Paul's dictum that "women should not be heard in the churches." It was held to be unseemly for the women to respond above a whisper.

The Congregational society was by far the largest and most popular. The Baptist came next, the Episcopal very much the smallest, both in respect to the building and numbers, but holding its own in other ways. There were, of course, people who held other sectarian opinions.

Hezekiah Price and his son-in-law, Calvin Coe, with his family, of whose three daughters Dr. Hough said "they were the most graceful walkers in town" (administering at the same time a severe snub to an unlucky member of his own family), were often at St. Andrew's. They were Universalists. Esquire Pomeroy and his family, also of the same faith, frequented the Baptist Church.

The families of Charles and Edmund Parker were, of course, Methodists, the elder brother, John, being a clergyman in that denomination, but they with their families were often at St. Andrew's. Edmund Parker afterward became identified with this parish, and so continued until his death, in 1868.

Dr. Hough and his nephew, Isaac Tibbals, were supposed to hold heretical opinions. They were Unitarians. They were, however, constant attendants at the Center Church.

Although the observance of the Lenten season was confined to the Episcopalians, a psychologist might be interested in the fact that the protracted meetings, which were a feature of the revival system of the era, were always held sometime in the lengthening or Lenten days. The more unique features of these revival

meetings are of the past. Sometimes—often, indeed—it would be that all but the most necessary work was neglected. The factories were nearly, sometimes quite, closed, and everybody gave themselves up to religious exercises of, it must be conceded, the most lugubrious nature. A deep gloom settled upon all faces. There were few luxuries to give up, and not many amusements to abandon.

True, there were people who did sometimes dance, and there were those who sometimes played whist, but their best friends really did not know what would become of them if they persisted in such evil doings. This principle or prejudice had nothing to do with Lenten or revival seasons, as dancing and card playing were looked upon as hopelessly demoralizing all the year round by many excellent people.

Denominational feeling was far stronger and more exclusive than in these later years. There was a great deal of intolerant nonsense. The writer recalls the amusing air of being almost dangerously broad in opinion with which a most excellent man announced that "he believed there were some very good people among the Episcopalians."

Far away are the old days, and almost forgotten are the old prejudices. Passion Week is now seriously recognized by all Christian sects as a season of peculiar fasting and prayer. Christmas and Easter are now also joyously observed by all classes of Christian people. Easter in the old times was signalized only by extra hymns set apart for that purpose.

Sitting in the warm, well lighted, cushioned and carpeted church, waiting for the advent of the surpliced choir, one can hardly realize that the Lenten season of 1899 means just the same as the ascetic observance of

1836. Far apart as are these two periods, they are less remote from each other than are the Eastertide solemnities in all the churches from the meagre and only one at St. Andrew's in the time gone by.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### HOUSECLEANING TIME.

SOMEBODY who evidently knew all about it said:

“ In the spring a young man's fancy  
Lightly turns to thoughts of love.”

Of course the verdancy of the season is coincident with the cogitations of the embryo town councillor. One turns with reluctance from a topic so fascinating and replete with possibilities to one of more practical import. It was in the spring that the thoughts of the old-time, thoroughbred New England housekeeper turned more especially to the cyclical upheaval of the domestic system known to all men as housecleaning.

In the former years, even before the branching trees began to respond to the pulsing of the rich juices at their roots, the preparation for the household orgies began. The soft-soap making was the first movement. Did any one of this generation ever by any chance see an ash-leach? One fancies not, for it was a structure obsolete years ago. In its day it rivaled the modern stovepipe as an incentive to an energetic vituperative method of phrasing on the part of the (by courtesy) head of the house.

Preliminary nagging began about St. Valentine's day, and if all went well the ash-leach was in operation by the first of March. A barrel would answer the purpose well enough, but being easy to arrange, the pains-taking matrons would have none of it. The properly built ash-leach was a four-sided, quadrilateral structure

of boards, the point supported about a foot from the ground by a rude but stout frame of sticks. Into the receptacle the wood ashes, preferably oak or hickory, which had been carefully saved through the winter, were poured until it was full. Water was then judiciously applied that it might neither too fast nor too slow percolate the ashes.

The lye thus resulting was carefully watched, and as soon as the pale color suggested the strength to be exhausted, the boards were taken down and the leached ashes applied to the garden or corn field.

All the long winter every particle of fat and grease had been carefully saved, looked to and guarded from inroads of "mice and men." One eminent housekeeper went so far as to prepare bits of rags, with which the plates used at meals were wiped, and the result added to the precious accumulation. These rags were carefully boiled, and the water from them set apart to cool and then skimmed of its accumulated fat.

The necessary boiling together of the lye and the fat was done either at a chosen spot in the back yard or in the great, deep, open fireplace. After the boiling, the compound was poured into its final receptacle, and, inconsistent as it sounds, water was then added from time to time to thicken it. If the soap "came" properly, great was the jubilation thereat; and if not (and sometimes the most skillful soap-maker failed), it had to be put up with like other misfortunes.

The inferior economics having been successfully dealt with, the notable housewife began the real business of the season, which was scrubbing and "nothing but it"—at least not much. Walls and floors, tables and chairs and bedsteads, all had to be scrubbed, except the mahogany articles, which were oiled, and the cherry

tables that were waxed and then rubbed bright. It was a process that brought out the richness of the grain of the wood as nothing else ever did or ever will, perhaps, and besides, being laborious and, to an exhausting degree, weary work, it was much in favor; for to meet the exigencies of housekeeping with any ease of method was "a reproach and a hissing" in the estimation of those assiduous New England housemothers.

The scouring of the tinware was an important feature of the crisis. Rows upon rows of shining pails and pans and utensils of all sorts were displayed for the admiration—and exasperation—of the less muscular or less well provided sisterhood. The store of home-made house linen, blankets and counterpanes was duly looked over, washed, ironed, counted and consigned to another twelve months of oblivion. The weary but complacent old time housekeeper held herself in readiness to attend to her butter and cheesemaking, her pickling, preserving and fruit drying.

Sausage making and curing of hams, the salting of barrels of beef and the preparing of the hung beef for the winter's consumption were presided over with serious ceremonial and solemn incantations. The trying out of lard and tallow and the candle making for the year's supply brought the year nearly to its weary end and the next housecleaning season.

But the old-fashioned housekeeper has gone, and the old order has changed. In these days to scour tin with vigor is to scour holes in the same; and there are lovely granite and agate and enameled wares, and there are all sorts of soaps and powders that, if one believes the advertisers, one has only to shut up the different sorts in a room by themselves, put on one's best gown, and

wait while the compounds, in sheer competition, do the work.

In the olden time of soft-soap making, which opened the season of miscellaneous scrubbing, very few carpets were in use. The writer remember a best room on North Colony street in which the furniture was a table, six plain chairs and a "Boston" rocking chair. The only indication of any ornaments were a volume of extracts from Shakespeare and a pitcher of purple lilacs on the table. The floor was bare of carpet or rug, and the walls were paneled with oak; but the floor was as white almost as paper, and the cherry table shone with beeswax and rubbing.

One has seen since then floor rugs that cost a fortune, tables of carved ivory loaded with costly curios from every known land under the sun; but somehow the picture of that old-time room, with its atmosphere of—well, yes—intense purity, has remained unchanged since that springtime of long ago.

Candle-making was a very serious affair. "Dipped" candles were used first; afterward tin moulds came into use. As may be supposed, the candles were used with severe economy. The Saturday cleansing and polishing of the steel candlesticks and snuffers was the abhorred task usually allotted to the younger girls in the family.

Whale oil in glass lamps was a luxury reserved for special and ceremonious occasions, and the glass lamps were often the most conspicuous mantel ornaments in what were then supposed to be the best rooms.

By 1836 carpeted parlors were common, but I doubt if there were a dozen houses in Meriden where carpets were in use in the living rooms.

Not far from this time it was that cooking stoves

began to take the place of the open fireplaces furnished with crane and hooks. With the advent of stoves and the use of coal came a change in housekeeping methods and new outlets for housewifery energies.

In some former period of existence (in the spring, probably), Edwin assured Angelina that

“The sigh that rends thy constant heart  
Shall break thy Edwin's, too,”

or words to that effect. Apparently the time had now arrived. At breakfast Angelina would observe, apropos of nothing, that something ailed the kitchen stove. Edwin, of course, would become more or less thoughtful upon hearing this, and when further instructed that before anything else could be properly done the stovepipe must be taken down and cleaned, Edwin, whistling “The Long, Long Weary Day,” immediately became plunged in an anxious bustle, and was obliged to meet a man on important business.

Then Angelina, being an active young woman, affirmed to herself that anybody could take down a stovepipe. She burned her hands and blackened her face and dress, but the stovepipe was finally lying in sections in the yard. After an hour's struggle, the pipe, thoroughly cleaned, of course, was back more or less in its place on the stove.

Edwin, probably a wise man in his generation, would accept with ~~an inability~~ <sup>a</sup> very poor dinner, and would remark as he ~~arrived at~~ Connecticut Havana, with the slightest accent:

“You did not get that stovepipe quite straight.”

Then he changed his cigar to the other side of his mouth, holding it firmly between his teeth, as he rapped the pipe lightly on one side and then on the other.

And behold the sheet iron fiend that resisted the persuasions of hammer and hatchet, the tongs and the rolling pin, the potato masher and the big shears, yields to the gentle manipulation, and is settled and fixed firmly in its place.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MANUFACTURE OF THE HOOP SKIRT.

READER, do you remember the learning of "didactic pieces" and hymns, to be repeated to the minister when he made a pastoral visit, or to any other unfortunate on whom parental partiality could lay hands.

Among others one recalls, as being of a high moral tone, and therefore especially and most particularly appropriate for the hearing of the victimized parson, was one of which only four or five lines are retained in the memory. The stanzas, after setting forth the folly of being proud of new clothes, went on to assert that the

" Poor sheep and silk worms wore  
That very clothing long before."

Now children are regular Gradgrinds as to facts, and truly this statement seemed to be lacking in veracity. Besides, why should the clothing be worn long before? One was pretty sure it was not so worn; but being afraid of a sheep, and going nearly into hysterics at the touch of a worm, one could not investigate the matter as one could wish.

The author (Dr. Watts, probably, it sounds like him) went on giving more enigmatical information, and finished by stoutly affirming that

" The art of dress did ne'er begin  
Till Eve, our mother, learned to sin."

Having grown older since the days of " didactic

poetry," one is naturally less particular in the matter of facts, and instead of disquieting oneself, because one's fellow beings have too much ideality, one sees a fine opportunity for criticism. Regarding the above couplet, there are two points to which exception is taken.

First, the omission of Adam's name, as though Eve were the only sinner. Exact justice requires that the lines read thus: "Till Adam and Eve," etc.

In the next place, it is apparent to a reflective (feminine) mind that Eve's procedure in this matter of the "art of dress" was not reprehensible, but, on the contrary, was laudable and to be approved, since she was simply making the best of the circumstances, being, as well as she knew how, equal to the emergency, in which respect her daughters have diligently followed her example ever since.

That Eve originated the "art of dress" explains, there is no doubt, why the despotic genius to whose exactions and impositions we submit with long suffering patience, and who initiates and presides over the vagaries of bonnets and gowns, not to speak of hats and coats, has hitherto been accounted feminine and spoken of as Dame Fashion. Strict accuracy now requires that the presiding genius be considered complex in character, and be styled Dame Fashion in America, Monsieur Fashion in France.

Within the last few years elements of comfort and common sense have steadily dominated the rulings of costume, and we must trust to the latter trait for protection in the threatened revival of the hoop skirt atrocity.

Still, if Dame and Monsieur Fashion require it of us, we shall very likely ignore comfort and common sense, and treat the hoop skirt, as human nature is said to

treat vice, "We shall first pity" (ourselves), "then endure, and then"—no, not embrace; nobody can do that. There is a standoffishness about a hoopskirt. Crinoline is another thing, and may possibly add a grace to costume; but a hoop skirt cannot.

Crinoline is a modern invention, but hoops were worn in 1744, a century and a half ago. In 1833, it was considered elegant to expand the bottom of the skirt by the use of "Jackson cord"—a stiff hempen rope which was inserted in the hem of the petticoat, and which was extremely apt to break from its fastenings, with results mortifying to the wearer.

During the fifties the hoop was brought into use again by the Empress Eugenie, who for her own convenience rehabilitated an old fashion. There were few periodicals in those years that devoted any space to details of costume. "Godey's Lady's Book" is the only one recalled, so the would-be fashionables did the best they knew how, and followed suit with Jackson cord (which had come to the front again), coffee-sack, grass-cloth and starched petticoats.

The making of hoop skirts in Meriden was brought about, so to speak, by carpet bags. For some years carpet bags had been rather an important production here. Very likely there are yet to be found in attics and closets specimens of these queer traveling appurtenances. They were of various sizes, but commonly, perhaps, a foot and a half square. The material used was Brussels carpeting; remnants, samples and so on, bought in quantity. They were lined with imperfect dress muslins procured directly from the factories. The handles were stiff rope covered with the carpeting, and they were fastened, or closed, by small brass padlocks. The keys of these locks were hung by a linen

thread, of the kind used in the making, to one of the kind used in the making to one of the handles.

These keys were, of course, intended to be detached, and kept securely, but it was not unusual to see carpet bags left on a car seat or in a rack with the tiny and inefficient key hanging by a thread. Queer as it seems, these bags were the fashion; and a new carpet bag was an essential particular in a wedding outfit. For several years the trade in these articles was a brisk one, and, as the material used was far from being expensive, the manufacture was profitable.

The shop where the business was carried on was located on the southwest corner of Broad and Camp streets. A number of young women were employed, and the work was also given out to be done at home by persons, who thus added a nice little sum to their pocket money. Carpet bags had pretty much had their day, and the business was flagging, when the principal of the concern saw while in New York the method of making hoop skirts, then a new manufacture.

Being a man "who never let the grass grow under his feet." he came home with the making of the new article fully determined upon.

"But how," said somebody, "how will you weave the tapes? You have no looms."

"That is easy enough," said Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. "It is only just three or four sticks and some strings. Anybody can do it. I could do it myself—if I only knew how."

The looms were erected and somebody found who "knew how" to run them, and the tape weaving was begun in the old clock shop. The wires were covered in a shop over east, and the articles completed in a building at the corner of Camp and Pratt streets. The cost of making was not great, and for awhile they sold

at a large profit. But it was soon found that the tapes, which were woven in a peculiar way for the insertion of the wire, could be bought quite as cheap as they could be woven here, and very soon there were half a dozen "hoop skirt factories" in town, most of them only occupying a room or two.

In a little while, the war having broken out, cotton became scarce and dear, the market was also overstocked, and the business ceased to be profitable.

Not far from this time, too, Queen Victoria had brought the Balmoral skirt into favor, and a factory was built for their manufacture, which afterward, much enlarged, became the "woolen mill" of to-day.

If the Master of Costume in France and his satellites in America so decree, we shall probably, sooner or later, ignore comfort and common sense, and the hoop skirt will be upon us. (The pun made itself.)

However, the general taste in the matter of apparel has been educated by the facilities of these later years, and it is to be hoped this will prevent any style from becoming positively ridiculous, as many of the former modes certainly were. An emendation can be seen in the so-called revival of the modes of the "Empire," and of 1860. The latter certainly do not have the awkward features of the gowns actually worn at that period. The lines are less abrupt, and are longer and more flowing. The feet are more sensibly shod, and the bonnets and hats at present worn make an entirely different thing of the costume.

A young and pretty woman will look more or less charming and attractive in anything, and the crinoline may be endured; but nothing, not even custom or a professional beauty, can make a peripatetic hencoop graceful.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE FIRST CATHOLICS.

IT must have been very early in the spring of 1836 that Curtis L. North rushed into the room (his tactics were always to seem enthusiastic) where Dr. Hough, Major Cowles and the ladies of the family were at tea, with the announcement: "The railroad is to go through the Corner."

Major Cowles was not moved out of his usual sedate composure by the news; he knew all about it before. For he and Judge Brooks were among the earliest projectors of the scheme, and were prominent and influential members of the first board of directors.

A route through South Meriden was talked of, and one on the east side of Meriden had been thought of, but dire was the dismay when either project became known. Nothing less than total annihilation was predicted to crops and stock, and everything else. Visions of dismembered cattle, scattered about the blazing hay-fields, disturbed the sleep of the landowners. For how, they wished to be told, could they spend their time in watching to keep their animals off the rails; and in a dry season it would be madness to allow the fire-laden engine to run the risk of setting fire to everything combustible. Men, who lived to know better, inquired, with pathos, what good their lives would be to them if their farms were to be cut into in such reckless fashion.

The route finally adopted proved altogether the most practicable. For one thing, it was pretty nearly a straight one. It had few curves; for it was then an

article of sapient railroad faith that the cars could not be carried with safety around an abrupt, or, rather, a short bend. Also, it could be made less expensive, the cutting at "Holt hill" being the only considerable one between Hartford and New Haven. This cutting was at first only wide enough for one narrow track. At a point not far from the present site at the Curtis home, the highway was really an excavation into the hill-side, nearly overhung by the high bank on the one hand, while on the other was a sheer descent of many feet, making a dangerous declivity, almost without protection.

The spot was wild and lonely—a favorite haunt of tramps, and was known as "Dugway." The land just here was heavily wooded; but Holt hill itself was a smooth cluster of pastures, famous for its luscious blackberries, whose low vines in the autumn carpeted the ground with crimson. The road over the hill joined "Farms road" just where it does now. At the foot of the hill stood the Holt farm house, a large, old-fashioned dwelling house of an excellent type, with ceilings traversed overhead by carved oaken beams, with paneled side walls and floors of oaken planks, so solid that it was almost impossible to drive a nail into them. The house had its own bit of romantic history.

When Russell Holt, who was the owner fifty years ago, was a young man, his mother, as the New England custom was, had bound to her until the age of eighteen a young girl. As might have been expected, the young people fell in love, very truly, as it turned out.

The mother strenuously opposed the affair, but she was ill, and could not dispense with the young girl's help, even if she might have sent her away, a course which the law forbade, for the state that gave the time

and labor of the bound boy or girl to the employer, also, when appealed to, protected the former from injustice. Finding herself near death, and, it may be supposed, thus having the greater influence, she exacted a promise from her son that he would never marry the girl. The letter of the promise he kept. He never married; but the young woman never left him. She lived in his house as his housekeeper and companion until his death at a great age. At first gossip and scandal were busy with the affair, but as time went on it died out. At Mr. Holt's death he left all he could leave to the woman who had been constant to him through evil report and good for sixty years. The house was torn down some years ago, and a modern dwelling now stands in its place.

Until the era of the N. H. & H. railroad, the only Emerald Isle man in town was a bright, witty fellow named Robert Clark. He was not a Protestant exactly, nor did he call himself a Catholic, although he was once heard to observe "he could be one easy enough." It happened one time that Julius Pratt wished to increase the force of water that propelled the great wheel of his factory, and Robert was engaged to dig a sluice which would give the needed supply. Robert agreed to do the work at a fixed price per foot. He had seen that the soil was soft and porous and the grade downward from the lake whence the water was taken. He cut and loosened the sods to the length and width required, removed a few to get the needed pressure, and then sat down to comfortably smoke his pipe while the sluice-way cleaned itself. This exploit so recommended itself to Mr. Pratt that Robert became his trusted factotum. This, however, was after the railroad had been in operation long enough to change a good many things.

The contract for the Meriden section of the road was taken by one Colonel Henry. He brought with him a large company of laborers, who were settled in barracks built on the rising ground north of Holt hill. These new settlers were a great curiosity to the citizens. A walk to Holt hill became one of the recognized recreations. These dwelling places were, of course, more or less crowded, but they were warm and comfortable, and many of them were kept beautifully clean and nice. There were children in plenty, some of them beautiful little ones. One infant in particular was an especial attraction, so very lovely was it. In every room some emblem of the religious faith of the occupants was conspicuously placed. Mass was celebrated certainly once while the work at Holt hill was in progress. The writer recollects very well hearing it spoken of, as it was naturally considered an event.

There is a tradition that this mass was celebrated by a French abbé who passed through town and was importuned by some of the workmen to give them the privilege. It is also said that the service was held in the open air under a large tree, necessarily cut down. This was very likely the case, as there was no room large enough to hold even a small congregation, and there were many large trees of the first growth scattered about.

Colonel Henry sometimes lamented the want of a pastoral head over his—especially upon pay days—rather difficult contingent. In the course of a few years the changes made by the widening of the railroad track so altered the grade that the narrow—for teams could not possibly pass each other there—and dangerous “Dugway” was altogether effaced. Probably no one now living could tell exactly where it used to be,

although the name was used afterward in connection with a part of the road much farther to the southward and having no likeness to the old Dugway.

When the work on the road was completed some of the men found employment in the town and settled themselves in homes. By this time, too, the pioneer, Robert Clark, had brought his family and settled them in a comfortable home on Broad street. A relative, one John Conley, had also built a small house near where he lived with his mother, a gentle, quiet old woman, who spoke only the Gaelic, and wore a "mutch" with white borders, and crown encircled with a broad, black band, and who, when her housework was done, seemed to find her chief solace in her rosary.

Several persons are remembered who were most devout in their daily devotions, being in this respect a reproach to their more lax Protestant neighbors. Other relatives of the two families followed, but they were Episcopalians. The Catholic population increased but slowly. All who wished the especial privileges of their own church went, preferably, to New Haven. In 1847 or 1848 a Roman Catholic church was organized, and the building hitherto the property of St. Andrew's parish, was bought and occupied by them.

In 1842, the society of St. Andrew's had bought and set up the first church organ in Meriden. The cost of the instrument was \$400. The case was of oak. The keyboard was enclosed behind gothic doors, which rolled to either side when the organ was in use. Its voice was excellent, being pure, firm, and with a rich fullness never excelled by any of the costly instruments which succeeded it. When the newly organized society of St. Rose's parish bought the St. Andrew's Church building at the corner of Broad and Olive streets, the

organ went with it. Afterward it was given by St. Rose's society to the Mission at Wallingford, and was at last entirely destroyed in the tornado of 1879. Miss Hannah M. Donovan, of West Main street, sang to this organ for some years. She made diligent and minute search for some traces of it, but could only find some small fragments of the keys, which she has in careful keeping.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### WHEN MERIDEN BECAME A CITY.

ONE fine morning in July, 1867, Meriden awoke and found itself a city, "armed and equipped as the law directs," with mayor, aldermen and councilmen all complete. And then Meriden did not know exactly what to do next. Now, there existed illustrious precedent for this state of inertitude. In a two-volume record of the early days of Queen Victoria's court, written by a person who was a member of the household at that time, it is set down that just such a state of matters existed then. Nobody knew precisely what was expected of them, and the young sovereign, only eighteen years old, just about the age of one of our pretty High school girls, could not tell them.

And, therefore, when assembled in the evenings the court used its best collective endeavors to refrain from yawning the top of its collective head off. For, of course, to yawn at court would have been the death of the British lion. But there was this difference between the Meriden city government and the English court—that the former were in no danger of boredom; things were made too lively for them to suffer in that way. But, on the other hand, it was like its illustrious prototype in this particular—that while, individually, each and every man knew precisely his business and how to do it, it was only collectively that a confusion of ideas prevailed.

Our citizens showed more perspicacity; they decided it to be their parts and duties to give the new mayor a

reception, and accordingly Mayor Parker's house was duly turned upside down. This preliminary settled, all hands addressed themselves to business, the city corporation doing their best to bring order out of chaos, and the citizens to opposing pretty nearly everything that was undertaken. It did seem rather hopeless. The streets were most of them, steep; all of them uneven and crooked; and although each individual was really desirous for the city's advancement, yet each was confident in his (or her) own mind that the emendations should begin somewhere else, no matter where the much-badgered city corporation began.

There had been attempts at improvement in former times, but the days had long gone by when at certain seasons the only safe method of crossing Harbor brook to a point several rods east of the wooden bridge was by a causeway of boards, built upon poles, with trimmed saplings for a railing. Or, when a party of young people, who were to attend an evening entertainment in the western part of the town, had to alight upon some boards at the foot of Linsley's hill while their carriage was pried out of the mud. Or, later still, when private enterprise had done something remedial for West Main street, the thin layer of crushed rocks would be covered by a quaking mass of mud, resembling nothing so much as a lake of soft soap, in the which, if one lost one's rubber, one was pretty sure to fish up somebody else's.

But, speaking of Linsley's hill—long, long before it was Linsley's hill—a little girl was sent with a silver fifty-cent coin to a milliner's shop, the only one in town just then, close by the present railroad station on West Main street. Strolling amid the grass and clover at the side of the road she lost the precious piece of silver,

and feeling, as children do, that the skies had fallen and life was over, the small maiden went wailing back home. Almost, if not quite, half a century after, an Irishman digging near the Curtis house unearthed, several feet below the surface of the ground, a silver fifty-cent piece, of a coinage within the first thirty years of the century. But, as Kipling says, that's another story.

There had been sidewalks in the past of plank. One on Colony street was suggested by, and much of the expense borne by, the late Dennis Wilcox. Another, of strips of board laid transversely across timbers laid lengthwise prone upon the ground and following the inequalities, led from a point somewhere east of the bridge to a point somewhere near the center of the town on the hill. These walks were hailed as a great convenience in their early days, but that on East Main street soon became a doubtful one. The timbers became thrown out of line by the frost, and the transverse strips of board became disjoined so that finally the wayfarer who essayed a walk from the "Corner" up the hill was obliged to walk delicately like Agag, the careless pedestrian not infrequently finding by the sudden upheaval of a plank the alternative of a standing position in the mud on one side, or a sitting one on the stone wall on the other. The boys, too, would sometimes find a piece of board seductively shaped just right for a ball club, those adjuncts of civilization being mostly homemade in those days.

This sidewalk had the honor of provoking a witticism from Henry Ward Beecher, who lectured in the Town hall at the period of the sidewalk's most marked dislocation. Finally, consideration for the lives and limbs of the citizens demanded that it be removed altogether;

which was done. But this was also of a day that was past.

The town was meanwhile rapidly growing, and was outgrowing the town laws, and it was seen that measures must be decided upon which should enable the place to develop its possibilities. Besides, there had come up a tramp and loafer element which was extremely difficult to cope with efficiently. Hence the city charter and incorporation and the entering of the city officials into their labors, which they found perplexing enough. Did they aspire to straightening a street? At once they were beset by weeping widows who could not—and would not, so there!—see their favorite Japan quince bush or dwarf pear tree sacrificed. Irate householders declared that nothing and nobody or nobodies should compel them to lay flagging in front of their premises when they did not want to do so, and could not afford it. As for their own property being enhanced in value by such enforced disbursement, they scorned the idea. The tramps refused to leave town till they got ready, and the loafers clung to their beloved street corners. The policemen were desirous of doing their duty; but the limits were undefined, and they did not know exactly what might happen if they exceeded their limitations, so that, finally, all—policemen, tramps, and loafers—did as Israel did of old—“Every man that which seemed right in his own eyes.”

Things could not, of course, go on in this way for long without coming to a crisis, and a scrimmage between the police and the parties of the other part resulted in the upholding of the former in the course they took by the lovers of good order, and thereafter they maintained and retained their control of the lawless social element.

Gradually, too, the crooked paths became straight, literally, and the rough places smooth. The inequalities of Colony street were removed, and one can scarcely believe that there was once an elevation from Washington street to Foster street that completely obstructed the view beyond and north.

Another street, too, where an indignant housekeeper, dish cloth in hand, once put to rout a half dozen lords of creation who had been deputed to prepare the ground before her front fence for a flagged sidewalk, is now a lovely, level, shaded highway, and within the week has been pronounced by a swiftly-speeding wheelman "a dandy street to ride on."

Twenty-five years ago St. Andrew's Church was unfinished. There was no soldiers' monument, and the spot which the High school occupies was filled by a row of unsightly rookeries. The Town hall was a "reproach and a hissing," albeit much improved from the days of its remarkable and most exasperating echo that, coming from the upper southwest corner of the auditorium, would repeat with ludicrous exactness the last two or three words of every sentence spoken on the stage. This echo was remedied by altering the arch of the ceiling.

In the vanished quarter of a century much has been accomplished in the perfecting of plans for beautifying a city so beautiful for its situation as this of ours certainly is. Much is still desirable to be done, and without doubt much will in the future be achieved.

Meriden's successive mayors are all living. The rank is at present unbroken. Two of the first four aldermen have departed. Eight of the first sixteen councilmen have also passed away. In the twenty-five years nearly or quite fifty men, prominent in town affairs, either

socially, professionally or in ecclesiastical matters, have moved off the stage of living men and given place to others who are as ambitious and as absorbed in the issues of the time as were those whom we meet no more at home or in the passing crowd. If this younger element do the duty of the hour as well as did those of whom we now speak in the past, they will not have lived in vain.

And when the city is fifty years old, and the tram cars propelled by cable or electricity, or compressed air, or something else of which no one has yet heard, and are making hourly trips from here to New Haven; when West Peak with its lower elevations is a public park and the east mountains terraced to their tops are built upon; when hospital and public library are and have been for years in good working order; when these things have been done, and others now not even dreamed of, it will not matter if the names of those who were instrumental in the carrying of all these things are forgotten of living men, for they will not have spent their "labor for that which is not bread." They will have done their part in building up a city "whose sons shall grow up as young plants," and whose "daughters shall be as the polished corners of the temple;" in whose streets there shall be "no decay" or "complaining." And the happy people who are "in such a case" are those who have the "Lord for their God."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### IN THE EARLY FORTIES—CUSTOMS OF MARRIED LIFE.

HALF a century and more ago married life was, as a custom, entered upon at an earlier age than is now thought advisable. Engagements were not, therefore, prolonged, and were not often announced, never formally. It happened very early in the forties that thirteen young couples were married within a few months. None of them would now be thought in other than moderate circumstances—that is, worth, perhaps, ten or fifteen thousand dollars; two or three of the brides belonged to families of this class. All of them, however, had the proper “setting out”—feather beds and bed linen, plain and very substantial. Two fortunate young women had also some ancestral china and silver.

Not much money certainly to start in life with; but on both sides a fund of mutual interests and of very genuine, even if not of very demonstrative, affection and respect for and confidence in each other. And, besides, an individual self-respect that kept them silent as to the trivial discords which will—owing, maybe, to “too much love and bad weather”—happen in an unaccustomed duet. This reticence was, also, a check upon that bane of young married life—injudicious interference.

Married life to them was a copartnership not to be entered upon “unadvisedly or lightly,” in which mutual love and esteem and discretion formed the capital stock. Capital stock, everybody knows, is subject to fluctuation, but it is not considered to be sound business

methods to throw it away for that reason. And thus it fell out that all these thirteen alliances kept their integrity "till death did them part." Such parting came early to two young mothers, who cherished their baby sons for a year or two, and were then called out of sight.

The wooing of those days was an enterprise conducted with a gravity and demure propriety that savored of dejection. A request to be "the company home" from singing school or evening meeting, or the almost equally solemn function of an evening party, was the usual preliminary. This being followed up and becoming noticeable, a meek suggestion that permission to call would be a coveted privilege would ensue. This permission accorded, matters fell easily into line, but an engagement was seldom confessed.

In fact, persons who prided themselves upon their reputation for veracity in other matters did not hesitate for a minute in formulating the most barefaced fibs when any remarks were made relative to matrimonial matters. Such fibbing being considered rather commendable than otherwise.

Church weddings were infrequent and, as at present conducted, quite unknown. The rite of the Episcopal Church was, of course, just the same then as it is now, but other clergymen used each his own taste and judgment. Even the ritual of the Methodist Church, which closely follows the Episcopal marriage service, was very seldom used by their ministers.

Rev. Harvey Miller was very concise in this regard. "Are you both agreed?" he would ask; an affirmative word by the aspirants; then, "I pronounce you man and wife." A cordial handshake brought the brief ceremony to a close.

As to the wedding habiliments of the era, a stiff, white satin stock, upholding a very high and sharp-pointed collar, and white kid gloves, gave luster to the costume of the groom. For the bride, a light silk, plaid or changeable, was the coveted material, although white muslin was sometimes but not often chosen.

The gowns of that time, of whatever material composed, or for whatever use designed, were put together with "weltling cord" at every seam except upon the skirt. Yards of silk or muslin or calico, as it might happen, were cut into narrow strips, with which the cord was covered, and every "seam, gusset and band" was put together with the clumsy addition.

The first tight sleeves were worn about that time. (By the way, they were thought at first scarcely decorous.) They were worn very tight, and the corded seams were most uncomfortable. Sometimes the "weltling" was covered with a contrasting color.

One young Cheshire lady, whose wedding dress was of light brown silk, had it profusely corded with pink silk. In cut and detail, the present styles resemble those of fifty years ago; but there is now more latitude in adaptation to the personnel of the wearer than was then permitted. Few young women dreamed then of having twenty new dresses, with hats to match.

Bonnets should be said; hats for girls were a most improper head covering, for grown people as simply impossible. The wedding dress and bonnet were worn as the best church-going costume until circumstances made such going—and there was nowhere else to go—inconvenient and unsanctioned by public opinion.

The following is a description of an early Meriden wedding, as given in letter written to a friend by Mrs.

Edgar Munson, formerly of Meriden, now a resident of Williamsport, Pa.:

"The mention of my sister Amelia brings to mind, with the other statement, her marriage in 1824. It was simplicity itself in comparison, but a sensation at the time. It was a morning wedding—not 'high noon.' No cards were sent out, these appearing first some eight or nine years later. The bride and groom taking a wedding trip soon after the ceremony (instead of remaining at home over the first Sunday to 'walk out'—this meaning to appear at church arm in arm) was a new feature worthy of discussion. The cut of the bridegroom's clothes differed, no doubt, from the present style. The bride was attired in white figured silk, with proportions just ample enough in skirt for an easy movement of the limbs. The gathers were few in the back; the waist about six inches in width, cut low in the neck and joined to the skirt about midway between the upper part of the chest and the waist line. The sleeves were merely a cap, cut in orange quarters and filled in with lace, and finished with a white gimp. Four or five bands of plush ornamented the skirt. The bride wore pink shoes of figured silk, cut low to show her silk open work stockings. She wore a coronet around her head matching the color of her hair. The Rev. Ashbel Baldwin performed the ceremony, bestowing a hearty kiss at the close as his prerogative. The wedding feast, to make it satisfactory, required only the orthodox 'loaf cake,' ornamented with frosting of various colors, aided by sugar mites, and something withal to make merry with from the overflowing decanters of wine from the sideboard. I think at this period no 'Total Abstinence Society' had been dreamed of. It must have been some eight years later when young

men and maidens, old men and children, were first awakened to obligations to ‘sign the pledge.’ ”

Some years ago (time goes fast) it chanced that eight ladies, whose weddings had occurred about the time we are recalling, met in the then parlors of the Universalist Church. The ladies of that society were giving a series of alphabetical suppers—and very good those suppers were. The weather on that particular night was stormy, and the eight, who were from the several religious sects in the city, had each of them thought there would be “nobody there: and it was too bad, as everyone counted;” and so there they were.

After the supper, wedding dresses came into the conversation, and it was found that not one of the eight had kept her own wedding dress; some of them had been remodeled into best frocks for young daughters. Two had furnished lining for dressing gowns for the respective heads of families. One of these, prepared with infinite secrecy as a birthday present, had the sentiment of the occasion marred by the accident of the sleeves being sewed in upside down and backside front, giving the tentative wearer, who did his very best to rise to the situation, the look of a man whose arms had suffered dislocation.

In an old cemetery in the city of Middletown there is, or was a few years since, an old brown headstone, set there many a year ago, bearing on its time-worn face the record:

To the memory—  
“ Who was in life  
My own most faithful wife.”

And another in a modern cemetery, cut in a rare and costly veined marble:

“ Loved and honored;  
Trusted and true.”

These two epitaphs might, with absolute truth, be written above the last resting-place of every one of those thirteen brides of more than half a century ago.

A few remain here widowed. Yet fewer, husband and wife, still walk here, hand in hand, as they started in their dual life. But the larger number

"Home have gone  
And ta'en their wages."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE SOLDIERS' CAMP AT HANOVER.

IN the years before and up to the breaking out of the war, there was between the two sections of the United States a remarkable state of mutual misapprehension. Some of the sympathy for the slave might as well have been given to the owners. Let any Northern housekeeper select the most idle, insolent, thievish and exasperating servant she ever knew or heard of, and multiply by a dozen or two, and she will have a faint idea of one of the trials of a Southern housekeeper. Add the certainty, also, that only by the expedient of selling could one be got rid of. But this was the domestic side, and might have stayed so, but for the political turn which affairs had taken.

The South had gradually secured predominance in the government, and when they thought it necessary, fought to retain their power, even if the disintegration of the Republic were to be the result. The Northern men were determined that the Republic should retain its structural identity.

The Southerners were in the habit of assuring the world that they represented the chivalry and bravery of the country, and the Northerners, without thinking or caring much about it, had conceded it. Both seemed to have forgotten that in two previous contests with another power the North had shown quite as much combativeness as the South.

This paper only proposes to deal with certain events of the summer and winter of 1861-'62, in the village of Hanover (begging South Meriden's new name pardon).

One Sunday in the summer of the earlier year a young matron was called upon to contribute to the needs of a "company of soldiers from Vermont who," she was told, "had been three days upon the journey by railroad, and had nothing to eat in that time." Without giving a thought to the absurdity of the statement, she turned over the family Sunday dinner to the supposed famishing patients and then started with her own and some neighbors' children to a point which would give them a view of the train on which they would leave town.

After the cars had gone by she was astounded to see the children run down to the railway and gather up several parts of loaves of bread which had been thrown out by some of the aforesaid starving men. Not until then was it really "borne in" upon her mind that if the men had walked from Vermont they would hardly have taken three days for it, and food was as plenty in one place as another.

She returned home to hear that there had been no service in any of the churches, so absorbed was everybody in the excitement at the time. It has been told over and over again, how in the Revolutionary war men "left the plow in the furrow" to join the army. In 1862 men laid down the hammer, turned the belt from the revolving wheel, wiped the pen and closed the desk and said, "I am going." But the women only turned pale and set their lips, but said no word to dissuade them.

Early in the fall of '61 the news came that a battalion of cavalry and artillery were to encamp in Hanover. They arrived on the 22d of October—a raw, cloudy, bleak day that October had picked out of November's pocket.

Probably nobody expected to see a company of

plumed knights on prancing steeds, yet there was a certain sense of flatness when about four in the afternoon the cavalry and artillery walked down the dusty road, looking anything but exhilarated by the aspect over the river of the wide, open, treeless meadow which was to be their home for the next three months. Certainly the prospect was not inspiring as they passed through the village to the ground selected, with nothing like a shelter to be seen. The place had, however, been well chosen. The soil was very dry and well drained with the river and "raceway" on one side, and on the north the "island" with a number of magnificent hemlocks, besides other forest trees, and the raceway embankment, which made a not insignificant shelter for the stables and tents. But at this time these were in the future.

Arrived on the ground, the scene was changed at once. Like magic, tents were set up, fires were built, and coffee and soup cooked. Certain amateur, juvenile reporters revealed that a cauldron of soup was upset, and some of the men "cried;" and small blame if they did. The camp being unorganized, the men went where they pleased, with the result that some went to prayer meeting and others got very drunk, although at that time there was not a saloon in the place. The next morning found everybody astir and busy, and before night the empty meadow of the day before held shelter tents, and cook tents, and stables for the horses were being rapidly built. Two days after the horses arrived in the evening of a very rainy day. The boy of the period was in great glee and had a magnificent time, for it was very dark, and the horses coming on the cars, which were much less well planned for in the transportation of animals than at present, were wild

with hunger and thirst. They broke away and ran about in the rain and darkness, being finally secured after an amount of strenuous exertion, which, judging from the enthusiasm of the narrators, must have been extremely exhilarating.

The uniforms came, and here again the ubiquitous small boy came to his own. There seemed to be no method of distribution practicable but to call the roll and give each man a uniform, hit or miss, the result being, of course, a uniformity of misfits. With the usual perversity of such apportionments, the tall man found himself provided with abbreviated unmentionables and jackets to match, while the garments allotted to the short man trailed on the ground, and his jacket followed the same perverse rule. By the time the uniforms were all distributed order and discipline were at an end, and officers and men fairly rolled on the ground with shrieks of laughter that rung beyond the camp ground.

In less than a week everything had settled into order. The bugle was heard sounding the reveille, the sunrise and sunset gun was regularly fired, and the day's work of the camp begun. From the highway the boys of the village could overlook the watering of the horses at the raceway, and the efforts to subdue a certain refractory horse, who would draw a load with all the patience in life, but positively refused to be ridden. He would stand with a look of meekness unsurpassed until the would-be rider was on his back, and then suddenly drawing all four of his feet together, dropping his head at the same time, would round up his back and land the aspirant for equestrian honors wherever his good or bad luck happened to put him. At last a soldier, who was an excellent horseman, said he could

and would ride him, and he managed not to be thrown, but that was all. After a long contest the man gave it up, and the horse was generally used as a draft horse, although he was a very handsome animal, and very intelligent.

Recruits came in fast, more stables were built, and tents were multiplied. The camp became the center of attraction for miles around. Omnibusses ran regularly, private carriages were going and coming, and the heavy camp teams were on the road continually. Twice a day the whole battalion was out for drill, and frequently made progresses through the town.

Several times during the winter Governor Buckingham and his wife visited the camp. Mrs. Buckingham was a plain, elderly, motherly-looking lady. She was dressed in a plain black silk and cashmere shawl. The manners of both were entirely without pretense, but had a dignity born of self-respect that ought to have been unmistakable. Yet, some time in the eight years in which he held the governorship he, with his wife, visited some place of resort. Plainly dressed and without escort, they were coolly received by the landlord and his subordinates, neglected at the table, and Mrs. Buckingham "looked over" by the lady guests. A newcomer recognized them, and his greeting caused consternation in the first place, and then an immediate mending of manners. But it was too late, and although not otherwise noticing the neglect they had experienced, they refused to spend the night in the house.

The sojourn of the battalion made a lively and brilliant episode in the social life of the town, but knitting socks and mittens and lint scraping took the place now given to dancing and cards. Still no one, after all, believed in the reality of the war. It was an exciting

period that would be of short duration, everybody thought. Very little snow fell until late in January, and the dust raised by the horses settling on the ice, made the skating looked to as part of the winter's amusement impossible. The soldiers joined in most of the village gaieties, which, truth to tell, were not excessively extravagant.

One very pleasant incident seems worth recording. The district school was presided over by Robert T. Spencer, Miss Lucretia Minor assisting. The standard of the school was good, and the scholars excellently trained. As everything bore the stamp of patriotism, Miss Minor adapted a dialogue to the prevailing idea, and the scholars gave it in the church. The copy is lost, and very little can be recalled. "Uncle Sam" bewailed the unruly and undutiful conduct of his children, and told them their behavior made him "pale as death." "Caroline" announced her alienation from the family; "Louise Ann did not care," she "had a beau regardé;" "Georgiana" declared "they would all go with sister Caroline;" and "Secessia" only "wanted to be let alone."

It was very well done. Adjutant Blakeslee had brought a detachment of soldiers to the entertainment, and when the dialogue closed by the singing of 'The Star Spangled Banner,' he gave the signal to rise, and the young soldiers joined with the splendid volume of sound always produced by the voices of men singing in unison.

Looking down the vista of thirty years the scene comes vividly to the recollection. The group of boys and girls on the platform, the soldiers in blue, in the prime and grace of young manhood—all of them, soldiers and scholars, equally fearless on the threshold of untried life.

Of some it must be written, "they are not," of others perhaps it were better if—but God knoweth best. And some have gone out into the world, doing their work in it, and doing it well.

Upon the thirteenth of January the artillery left the camp, and the sunrise and sunset gun no longer reverberated from the hill. The cavalry remained until the twenty-second of February. On that day, a sloppy, slushy morning, "boots and saddles" sounded for the last time, and the long line of horses and their riders turned their faces southward and rode out of sight. Some of the horses were sold, the lumber of the camp disposed of, and in a day or two scarce a vestige of the camp was left.

Some years after, when the war was over, some of the soldiers revisited the spot, or tried to. The river no longer ran rapidly, the "island" was under water, its great hemlocks were dead and the trunks submerged.

The lake formed by the setting back of the river covered more than half the meadow and all the ground where the tents had stood. One can hardly realize that there are men and women, fathers and mothers of children, who can "only just remember the war," so distinctly is it remembered by those who were then in the prime of life. The home-coming of the soldiers, when at last the long conflict was done, had its own pathetic side.

After one of the more decisive battles, one of the anxious wives heard that her husband was reported "missing." Try as she might she could get no trace of him. Months passed and she gave him up; but when the soldiers began to come back, she used to go to the station whenever a train came from the South, only hoping to hear, possibly, some last word.

One day while waiting she saw an emaciated man in the army blue leave the car. As his eye met hers he smiled, and only then did she know him, so worn and ill he looked.

"Why," said she, as she told the story to a friend, extending her arms as she spoke, "I could have taken him on my two hands and carried him anywhere."

They led him home, put him to bed and sent for a doctor. As he stood over him, the physician raised his hands; they trembled as did his voice as he said over and over, "How did he get home?"

After that first recognition he really never knew any of his family again. All those missing months he had been a prisoner, and when at last he was free, he had but one thought—to reach if he could once more those faithful arms which he knew would not fail him. So with all his might he kept his poor wits together until at last he met the look he had so longed for, and then he gave up the struggle. He only lived a week, and all that time he was living that terrible life of the prison over again, seeming, most of the time, to be fighting for bread. And when the end mercifully came, his wife said the only feeling she was conscious of at first was thankfulness that the agony was over.

Year by year as Memorial day comes around new graves are added to the already long list of departed soldiers. The village church, whose walls gave back the voices of soldiers and children, has been silent many a day. The voices which sounded there once will be heard there no more. But in the days of which a glimpse has been attempted it was vocal with the echoes of serious thought. In its pulpit the pastor, afterwards Chaplain Jacob Eaton, stood, as with a

solemnity born of conviction, he, after having spoken long and earnestly, concluded with the words:

"My brethren, I must go."

And he went, and came back as did many others—with folded hands and closed eyes.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE MARKET.

WHEN the center of the town was first known as the “Market,” no one now living can tell us. Nor does any one know when what is now the business center was first called the “Corner.” This locality bore the name certainly much more than a century ago, and bids fair to retain it for a century to come.

The “Market,” although it is a later title, is now almost forgotten and quite unheard of by our younger citizens. Elderly people—now “gone beyond”—have told the elderly people of to-day of the “wide green yard” to the east and south of the old tavern, of the “row of poplars in front,” and of the roads, with “grass growing between the wheel tracks,” leading to and from it. Upon this green, on training days and at “lection time,” and when a “vendue” (auction) was held, pies and gingerbread, doughnuts and molasses candy, with metheglin made of honey, and sweet (more or less) cider to wash them down, were for sale; for the thrifty housekeeper did not disdain thus to turn an honest penny. The farmers from Kensington and Berlin, and from Cheshire street, for this last was a rather populous locality then, and had a tavern and a store of its own (this property was held in the Miles family for more than a century) came “down” or “over,” as it might chance, and halted for rest and refreshment at the tavern bar, as they sought a better road to New Haven, and better prices for their produce than could be had nearer home. Preferably New Haven, for, as

they were wont to explain, "it was uphill all the way to Hartford."

Here, too, rested over night the long "strings of horses," driven down from "up the country" on their way to the seaboard, whence they were to be shipped to the West Indies. These were occasions of interest and excitement. Horse trades were not infrequent; bargain and barter were entered into with boisterous energy, and artful sagacity and astuteness. To the "Market" the farmers from "over east" or from "over west" drove their grass-fed, corn-fattened stock, to be bargained for and bought by the butcher, for there was in the thirties only one in Meriden. He drove around once a week, and his provisions were often engaged in advance. Later, in 1840, for instance, there were two butchers, and fresh beef could be had twice each week.

The arrival and departure of the stages were events of interest and wild excitement. These brought the weekly papers, the New Haven *Palladium* and *Register*, the Hartford *Times* and the *Courant*, with its fortnightly supplement. Often, too, glimpses could be had of notable men—women did not count for much in those days—as the stages delayed for dinner at the old tavern.

The people living at the east side of Meriden came "over to the Market;" from the north they "went down" to the Market. From "the Farms" and from Hanover they came "up to the Corner" and "up to the Market," and from the Foundry over west, from the "Coe farm," from the "Rice farm," overflowing then with young lives, the world all before them, from the Andrews, the Johnsons and the Merriams, they came "over to the Corner" and "up to the Market."

To the latter more usually to do their trading. For "Birdsey's store" was the larger of the two then in Meriden, and had by far the most varied and best stock. Here, also, was the only milliner in the place for some years, Mrs. Ann E. Merriam, a woman for whose sake one must take back the remark, that women were not of much account, for she deserved, no one better, the name of "A Brave Lady."

When she fully realized the heavy weight she must carry all her days, she took up the burden with a noble dignity, suffering in silence. Asking for no sympathy, and, therefore, seldom comforted by any, she gave to others out of her own heart so abundantly that many, when she departed, rose up and called her blessed.

Upon town meeting days the voters all came to the Market, for the Congregational Church basement was the town hall for the occasion, and the tavern bar-room did a thriving business. When the town attained to the dignity of having a real post-office of its own, the location was in the brick store of Eli Birdsey, at the southeast corner of East Main street, or in the building owned by Ira N. Yale, next south of the old bank, never farther away. Here for a good many years—I think more than twenty—Hiram Hall retained his place as postmaster. No matter which political party was in the ascendant, he kept his position. The reasons given were that he was a "good fellow," "everybody liked him," and "he ought to have it, as he could not work hard with his bad side." This diseased side finally caused his death.

The market was a rather undefined space, and whatever of interest took place within several rods of the tavern everybody went to the Market to see what was going on.

The eccentric itinerant preacher, Lorenzo Dow, once at least, perhaps twice, preached on the green. He is almost forgotten now, but was a notable character in his day. He used to appear in places distant from each other, and, if he thought the field a promising one, would, at the close of his preaching, give out that at a certain time, often a year distant, he would be there again upon a fixed day and hour, and, sure enough, he would keep his appointment. I think the aged lady who was my informant said that in this instance he failed to appear at the time set, and it was ascertained that he died on one of his journeys.

Just here, too, was the only shoe store in town. Very little, if any, ready-made stock was kept, but it was the place—"John Butler's shoe shop"—where every foot in town was measured for cowhide, calfskin, morocco or prunella shoes, all made upon honor, if not with great elegance of workmanship. (His tannery was at the northwest corner of Broad and Liberty streets.) Here, too, were sold the first rubber shoes in Meriden. Very clumsy things were those rubbers. They were "warranted not to leak or turn red." I do not think they did, either, but what was by way of a name called the sole of the rubber, had a way of spreading and bulging in the wearing that made them look much more like rubber bags than any sort of footgear. The rubber itself in a semi-liquid state was run upon a wooden mold or shapeless last, and the shoes had no more real sole than there is to a stocking foot—not so much, in fact.

At the Market the band played occasionally, for there was a very good one in Meriden even in those early days. Mr. Edwin Yale Bull, of Yalesville was a member of it, and is still living; as, I think, are one

or two others. Here, too, the yearly ball games were played. I believe this was called town ball. In this game those who took part stood on each side of and close to the roadway, while the players performed a sort of country dance down the middle. Here, also, the men employed in making the high-top carved back combs, so fashionable in the thirties, in the red shops a little way west of the tavern, played their diurnal game of quoits. I do not think they ever missed, in decent weather, playing a game in the middle of the day before resuming work for the afternoon.

The Market was the scene of the abolition riot in 1837. An accurate and concise account of the affair is given by Dr. C. H. S. Davis in his history. What very few people ever knew was the romance that grew out of that episode. The Thompson brothers were brought into town especially to assist in the riot. One of them had seen and become very much in love with a young woman belonging to one of the prominent Meriden families. The writer remembers him, conspicuous in an expansive red waistcoat, sitting in the south gallery of the old Episcopal Church (the only occupant at the time), with enamored gaze fixed steadily on his lady love, who sat, conscious, on the north side down stairs. The affair was not smiled upon by any of the friends of the young woman saving one old maid, who, having had an undeveloped love story in her own youth, sympathized with the pair in their difficulties. Mainly through her help they were married, and soon left for the West, where they were, when heard from, living happily. But that was sixty years ago.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

JOHN D. POST.

ABOUT 1840 John D. Post started a school in Meriden. Although it was called "The Academy," I think the enterprise was his own. It was a boarding school in a small way, and had a fair patronage from other towns in the state. The "Academy" was a plain, very plain, two-story structure on the high ground south of East Main street and east of Elm street. An oak tree marked—and perhaps does now—the exact location. A steep, ungraded path led up to it. In the winter this made one of the finest of sliding places. A long board was the accepted means of transit, and a standing position thereon the most delightfully fraught with peril. The felicity of rushing into jeopardy and stopping at the brink of a crisis is only experienced by youth with all life's real hazards in the future.

Mrs. John T. Pettee tells that once taking one of these rapturous standing slides, the velocity made it certain that nothing could save them from going over the bank. What shall we do? was the question. "Jump!" promptly answered Miss Marietta; which they did, landing unhurt in a snowdrift six feet in depth.

Mr. Post was progressive in his methods. He had a small battery for experiments in electricity. The apparatus was kept in a little cupboard back of the teachers' platform. To this the scholars had free access, and the older ones amused themselves with its effects, of course with very crude ideas and little understanding of its laws.

One day a circuit was formed, and a delicate young girl, who held the hands of two stalwart young men, received such a charge that she was made seriously ill.

Mr. Post made us happy with some very successful school entertainments. The Congregational Church was lent for the purpose. A platform was built in front of the pulpit, and a most delightful rendition of Dickens' *Dothéboy's Hall* ("Nicholas Nickleby") and from "Oliver Twist" were given. All the parts were taken by boys. A year after this, another of two successive days was given; this also took place in the church.

A famous (in that day) debate in Congress upon the abolition question, or some phase of it, was reproduced. The action of this was on the floor of the church, with a Speaker of the House, tellers and pages, all complete as possible. Daniel Webster, Stephen Douglas and the rest of the congressional big guns were copied or counterfeited more or less like the distinguished originals. Persons who were in a position to know declared it all excellently done. An orchestra was hired from Hartford, and the eclat of the affair was enhanced in that the leader named, I think, King, brought with him his silver cornet, presented him by admiring friends. This was for some years the most noticeable event of the kind among us. After Mr. Post had left town the academy changed owners as well as principals; one or two of the latter were eccentric in character and erratic in their method of conducting the school. It lost its early prestige, and was finally burned to the ground.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### EARLY STOVES AND THE SEWING MACHINE.

BY 1830 the severe plainness of early housekeeping began to be mitigated. In a few houses "sale" carpets had taken the place of home-made carpets, that had taken the place of sanded floors. Mould candles on high festivals, such as the meetings of the sewing society, for instance, were used instead of the tallow dips, and the japanned snuffer tray, with the polished steel snuffers, were reflected from the waxed surface of the table in the "spare room." About 1830 the open Franklin stove was prominent in the furnishing of well-to-do "front rooms." This stove, with its brass fender and brass andirons, with its brass-bound urn and brass knobs and ornaments, put wherever a place could be found for such embellishment, was, with its bright wood fire, a very cheerful adjunct to an apartment. But the keeping of all that brass work specklessly brilliant called for incessant care and constant labor. This fell upon some one member of the family, whose business it became to go over all that brass with salt and vinegar first, and then to polish with whiting. Later, oxalic acid made the work easier. Two or three times each week the work had to be thoroughly done, besides a daily superficial rubbing. Three or four houses in town had large, clumsy brass locks affixed to the doors; these also had to be duly polished. About 1834 the "Rotary" stove made its appearance as a kitchen "improvement." These stoves deserve a few words. They had no ovens; the place for the fuel

was a narrow box. Any excess of heat or overflow was checked by a turn of the crank, which caused the top of the stove to move in any direction required. This would remove the viand away from the fire, and thus, of course, put a stop to any culinary action; so that very nice management was needed to preserve the balance of power. The crank, too, with the "total depravity of inanimate things," had a trick of becoming useless, and the tongs had to take its place as the means of propulsion. The rotary stove, although one of the "improvements" of the time, went out finally when coal came in with the railroad. In these last months of the century coal is rapidly giving way to gas, which will soon in its turn be superseded by electricity for culinary purposes, as it already has been for heat and light. In those former times the anxious mother taught her eight or nine years old daughter to knit. All the "every day" stockings worn by a family were knitted of homespun woolen yarn or cotton. The well conducted little girl usually did her stint of a certain number of "rounds." When she could "set a heel" smoothly, and "toe off" a pair of hose properly, the work was shown with as much pride and pleasure as the fond and proud mother of to-day exhibits in her small daughter's music or drawing. At twelve the young girl was proficient in the "digging and ploughing" of cambric, miscalled "hemming." At sixteen the maiden, properly taught, stitched her father's and brothers' shirt bosoms, collars and wristbands, taking up, with exactness, upon her needle four threads, two forward, two back. Nor was she thought fitted for marriage unless she could, unaided, cut out and make a shirt.

The advent of the perfected sewing machine brought

many changes. Factories for making men's garments came rapidly into existence. Here I am reminded of the "Dayton sisters," two maiden ladies who, armed with shears and tailor's goose, went about from house to house, often engaged months beforehand, the only makers and repairers of men's garments in town until 1828. In that year Lewis Greene opened a tailor's shop where the First National Bank now stands. He bought the land, a lot large enough for a dwelling house and a generous garden, besides the shop upon it, for not more than three hundred dollars (I think I recollect being told two hundred) of Major E. A. Cowles, giving his note. I think the method of payment must have been unique, for "as fast as he (Lewis Greene) earned a few dollars—sometimes only one or two—he paid them to Mr. Cowles, who would give him credit on the note for them, and reduce the interest in accordance." Mr. Green was the first and, for a good many years, the only tailor in town. The sewing machines, for they multiplied rapidly, did much to relieve the weary tedium of women's work. Yet it was true, as Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe once observed, "That the more obvious effect was that women put seventy-five tucks where they previously put only fifteen."

There is now a renewal of interest in hand-sewing upon delicate materials. In truth, fine, plain sewing and embroidery done by hand have a grace and finish lacking in the best production of any machine. Something of individuality goes into it. Knitting, too, for a while a lost art, is being revived. Great, also, are the changes in the housekeeping. Does the housekeeper aspire to be past mistress in economy, and finds that soap is a formidable item of expense—lo! a neat package of alkali and a gallon of water does all and more

than the ancient ash-leach and six weeks toil ever did. Nor does she with bleeding and abraded hands scour twice each year, with soft soap and sand, the tinware, which lasted through one generation, and then, mended, half through the next. She finds the modern tinware is not planned for such heroic treatment, so she hies to the five cent store, replenishes her stock and saves her hands.

Thanksgiving preparations no longer include the making of the winter store of pies, to be frozen and brought into use when wanted. In 1842 a young girl, sixteen years old, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, made sixty pies in one day, heating the brick oven for the purpose. It is only fair to add that the erstwhile young pie maker is now, although past seventy years, a graceful and elegant woman, fully up to all the modern literature and current events of the day.

Only here and there are to be found, in their old places, the plain, low-roofed dwellings common in the first half of the century. Comfortable and plain houses were they, and nearly uniform in exterior proportion and interior plan. Sound in timber, they have been moved and many of them modernized. Their places are taken by new and handsome dwellings, worthy the title of mansions, with "modern improvements."

The old-fashioned dooryards, overrun with red and white roses and June pinks, are no more. They have given place to smooth green turf and vases of classic model, from which are shed petals and colored foliage grown from stock brought from lands beyond the once mysterious Eastern seas. The Town Hall and the High school stand where once the wide, straight garden paths defined the generous garden beds, in which succulent vegetables grew sociably side by side with glow-

ing tulips and peonies, lilies and tall, pale rockets. The broad beds of herbs, burnet (hot, biting and spicy), sweet clover and thyme, saffron and sage, the long rows of red and white currants, with now and then a bush of black currants, are now

“ Only pictures that hang upon memory’s walls.”

I think few places can be so blossomy with wild flowers and so fertile in wild fruit as was, in that old time, what is now the heart and center of the city. In 1845 all, or nearly all, of the country between Broad and Colony streets was a rustic wilderness, traversed only occasionally by some one who wished to take a shorter route than the road between Clarksville to the Market, or from Prattsville to the Corner. More than once or twice in the forties a large animal, supposed to be a wild cat from the mountains, was seen by persons thus crossing. In the spring of 1845, while walking with my husband near where now Warren street joins Camp street, we came suddenly upon a mother quail sitting on her nest. So quiet had been our approach that she was not disturbed, and we left her there.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### ECCENTRIC CHARACTERS.

OF the persons who form the class called "characters," we now see few or none. In the earlier years of the town there used to be several whose advent upon the street was noticeable, and whose round of visits varied the monotony of housewifery toils. Perhaps in the hurry and bustle of these latter days we fail to observe the salient traits.

Old Amos Austin, who lived in the southern side of the town, believed himself to be possessed of occult insight. He believed his house haunted by witches. These he rigorously kept in abeyance by the fumes of a pungent lye of his own concoction.

"The vile odors from his chimney were probably more effective to the neighbors than to the witches."

His two daughters, Emily and Phebe, were also well known eccentrics. They lived to a great age, and died at the town farm not many years ago.

Amos Austin's brother, Caleb Austin, was laughed at and nicknamed the "prophet," from his prediction that his farm and homestead would be laid out in "town lots, and be worth as much as two thousand dollars." This property of his lay just at the foot of Olive street. There was an enclosed lane or court opening off South Colony street. In it were two houses—one large and old-fashioned, the other small, low and equally old. Caleb owned them both. It was called by the old people of 1835 the "old Atwater place." To the old people of to-day it has seemed a mistake that Olive

street should not have been named after the old “place.”

Caleb was a man of large frame, and would have been tall if he had not been so bowed down as to seem almost humpbacked. He went about carrying a tin trunk, from which he peddled “notions.” His business method was a peculiar one. He once refused to sell one of the two darning needles he had in stock, as, he said, by thus selling he would only “break up his assortment.” He lived to realize his two thousand dollars.

The larger house was torn down many years ago; the smaller house, with land adjoining, was bought by Mr. E. O. Roberts about forty years ago for three hundred and seventy-five dollars.

Mrs. Edgar Munson, of Williamsport, Pa., who was Miss Lucy Maria Curtis, of Curtis street, writes that “Caleb Austin’s threatening ‘tarnal ruin’ to the impenitent and Joab Hall’s thunderous appeals to the same were a great stimulus to the attendance under the low roof of the old Baptist basement of the boys, who sought amnsement rather than grace.”

Another familiar figure was “Beck” Williams, who periodically left her home in a neighboring hamlet and trailed around town, clad, even in winter, in a thin cotton gown. She went about from house to house retailing gossip and setting neighbors by the ears; between times railing spitefully against two of her own relatives, whom she, supposing herself to be quoting Scripture, piously spoke of as “Bell and the dragon.” Poor Beck Williams was at last found dead in the fields near the East mountain.

A foreigner in town was in those days rarely seen. One, a Spaniard, John Antiwine (Antoine?), lived near

the Wallingford line. He, with his wife and dog, took long daily walks up and down the turnpike. The wife owned the alliterative and rhymthical "front" names:

"Caroline Catharine  
Christiana Antiwine."

These names the small boys of sixty years ago used, upon the appearance of the trio, to chant more or less in unison.

Antiwine's nearest neighbor was the "Widow Clark." She kept the toll gate between Meriden and Wallingford. Her time was fully occupied in keeping a sharp lookout for the "ninepences" and "four-pen-happences," and an occasional "quarter-dollar" for a "four-horse-team." She never allowed either to escape her if she could help it, and vigilance was needful, for to "run the gate" was thought a very audacious and funny exploit by the boys.

"Old Cabin" was another oddity, who used to limp up and down the turnpike "not always on the even tenor of his way." His limp was caused by a sprained ankle, which Dr. Hough mercilessly jerked into place, disregarding the shrieks of "an old liar who ought to be hurt."

Erastus Evans, who came from and went no one knew whither, was for years a feature on the street, as he twice each day went to the old tavern for his diurnal dram. It was said that by going into the water his right leg was drawn up into a right angle with the thigh. With the right knee in a rest to keep it from the ground, and a wooden block in each hand to protect them also, he got over the ground in nearly a sitting position, seldom speaking and never complaining.

Dr. Arza Andrews was another noticeable individual. He was a man of much learning and skill, but he could

not always be induced to apply either. He and his tall stately wife used to ride about in his sulky, both of them on the one narrow seat, he bending forward to urge, by slaps with a shingle which he carried for the purpose, his Rosinante to a quicker step, the animal meanwhile keeping unmoved its usual calm aspect and funeral pace.

One is reminded of the widow of Esquire William Yale, whose homestead at Broad street is still in excellent preservation. "Widow Bill," as she was called, was thought eccentric and unfeminine for driving about with her own horse and gig. She and her gray horse "Rochelle" were noticeable. She was only ahead of her time so far as driving went. She was also fond of litigation. Once, however, impatient of the law's slow process, she brought temporary defeat to her opponent by a volley of eggs, which she had saved until their age made them the more fit for her purpose.

In spite of her eccentricities she was a brilliant woman. She remained personally attractive until quite aged.

A tramp woman with two children used to pass yearly through the town in the spring, following the turnpike south. The children, a boy and a girl, were at first quite small. They have probably helped to swell the criminal classes. On their last visit at a house, where they were regaled with a lunch, a gold ring of some value disappeared with them. The children were then apparently about fourteen years old. There were, also, men of marked character of a different type than these who have been mentioned.

Colonel Seymour, "Uncle" Ben Upson, Captain Collins, and Dr. Hough were men who were not compelled to exert themselves, and therefore did not.

Still, in these electrical times men of greater age than any of them are only happy in active business. Dr. Hough, though, employed part of his leisure hours in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties. He used to tell with laughter of one rebuff he met with. Driving up Broad street, he noticed at a spring on the left hand (this spring was just west of the residence of A. S. Thomas and Mrs. Russell) a man washing some of his underclothing.

"What are you doing?" asked the bluff doctor, in his usual peremptory tone.

"Minding my own business," was the concise answer.

Events, which now only make a brief newspaper item, were then a town sensation, talked over for months. Such was the burning of the lonely farmhouse on the "Scovill farm," lying high upon the southern slope of the East mountain (Berlin). Mrs. Scovill was a widow and a notable housekeeper, with a store of house linen of her own spinning and weaving. She had whole pieces of home-made flannel, and carpets (home-made), colored with yellow oak bark, sumach berries, and the indigo weed and sweet fern, for she was expert in such matters. Her imbecile son set fire to the dwelling, and all these household treasures were reduced to dust and ashes. Asked why he did such a thing, the boy said "he wanted to go West, and his mother said she could not leave her house."

Another event was the finding, by some sportsmen, the dead body of Betsy Todd, one of the town poor, who occasionally wandered into town. She lost her way and fell off or down the "Berlin" or East mountain. She had not been long dead when the hunters found her.

Sundry comparatively modern versions of the origin of "Mt. Lamentation" have been current at different times. But the story told by the old people of sixty years ago was, that a hundred years ago, or more, perhaps, a "Wallingford man" was missed from his home and never after heard from. A few years later a skeleton was found on the mountain, and it was thought to be the remains of the missing man.

The greatest sensation of the time and hour was the hanging of a townsman, Peter Lung, for the murder of his wife. "Young and old flocked from Meriden to Middletown to witness the hanging." Dr. Hough and some of the family started to go, but were so overcome by horror at the thought of it that they, "when they had got over so far as the gate, turned around and came home again."

Peter was never in his life of so much importance as at his leaving it. Eleven or twelve thousand persons witnessed his execution. It is on record that he was "unmoved by the presence of the crowd and by the military parade." On the morning of his execution service was held in the Congregational church in Middletown, and Peter, sitting in the front pew, listened to his own funeral sermon, preached by the Rev. David Dudley Field, of Haddam, Conn., father of the famous brothers of that name. The sermon preached on the occasion was printed, and the pamphlet is in the possession of Mrs. Jane Coe Clark of Hingham, Mass. The text was from Luke xxii: 34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be surcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

The sermon concludes thus:

"May God save us all from sin and misery. May

He have mercy on him who is about to die; and may the Lord Jesus Christ remember us all when we shall come into his kingdom. Amen."

The pamphlet is entitled: "Sermon against drunkenness, preached the day of the execution of Peter Lung for the murder of his wife."

The title page has also a text:

"Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death; for blood it defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein but by the blood of him that shed it."—Numbers xxxv: 31-33.

The sermon is a strong temperance appeal, as the murder was committed under the influence of liquor. It is a pamphlet of twenty-eight pages in all, six of which are given up to a "Sketch of Life and Hopeful Repentance of Peter Lung." "Printed by Seth Richards, and published at the request of gentlemen in the city of Middletown, July 20, 1816. Sermon delivered by David D. Field, of Haddam, Conn."

The sapient remarks with which the sketch of Peter's life concludes partakes of the humorous; thus:

"At the public religious exercise of the day he manifested resignation and composure, and afterward expressed his approbation of the sentiments which had been delivered."

He had but little time to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. His circumstances were very unusual. A note at the bottom of the page informs us that "how he would have lived had he been reprieved is unknown."

On his last morning he was unmoved by the military parade and the multitude, amounting, it was supposed, to eleven or twelve thousand persons, who assembled to witness the execution.

To the list of odd characters once in Meriden the name of Chauncy Hall should be added. He lived in a little house on the road to Westfield. He was an inventor, or tried to be one. He went by the name of "Quizzy." Sixty years ago he conceived the notion of "stone shingles." About that time, too, he invented a wire fence, and actually enclosed a piece of land in that way, using common wire for the purpose. He also tried feeding silkworms on oak leaves. So sanguine was he, that he prophesied such plenty and cheapness of the material "that every servant girl would have a silk dress." Silk gowns are plenty and cheap in these days, and so are wire fences and tiled roofs, but poor "Quizzy's" ingenuity has not brought the result.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MANUFACTURE OF TINWARE.

CHIEF among the old industries of Meriden was the manufacture of tinware. "Uncle" Sam Yale had several small shops scattered about on Liberty street and more at Wall and Broad streets. Here also were the extensive barns belonging to his farm.

Esquire William Yale had a large shop at 465 Broad street (where Mrs. Frank Foster's house stands); Edwin Yale had large shops on South Charles street; Goodrich & Rutty did a large business on South Broad street, below Ann. One of the largest and oldest of all was that of Esquire Noah Pomeroy, "over east." Nearly, if not quite as large and as old, was that of Esquire Patrick Clark at Clarksville, on North Colony street. In 1840, this was moved to the corner and—for that period—a large two-story building took the place of the numerous small shops on the old site. Some years later it became the Meriden Savings Bank, Edwin Curtis, President. Later still it went through another transformation. The building was cut into two; part of it is on Veteran street.

The working force of the tinware trade were journeymen and apprentices. The latter had a good deal to learn before they could attain to the dignity of the former. The making of tinware, as it was in those days, is now a lost art. Fifteen separate processes were thought necessary before even a pint basin was ready for the market. Each article was in several parts, carefully proportioned, and cut out from patterns by the

great shears. Nobody dreamed then of making all sorts of tin things by simply dropping a great lump of iron onto a sheet of tin—and a thin one at that. The stock used was in sheets, ten by fourteen inches. This was brought from Albany to New Haven by the old sloop "Tantivy." From New Haven it was brought to Meriden by Joseph Hough, who did a regular carrier's trade for a great many years between the two places. Mr. Bull says that in the thirties a storm of eighteen days' duration prevented the sloop from coming into the harbor, and for a few days Hough made money by bringing up flour from New Haven and getting fourteen dollars per barrel for it in Meriden. His harvest was a short one.

The young men employed in the various tin shops made a large contingent in the younger population of the town. It was remarked when, on one occasion, the men's gallery at the Baptist church was unusually well filled, that every man or boy there was in the tin business in some capacity. The apprentices were from respectable, often well-to-do families. They were boarded either in the family of the principal or in some other where they would be carefully looked after.

There were not so many temptations for the misleading of youth as there are now. The young men were, most of them, well principled and of moral rectitude. All were intelligent and as well educated as any men out of the professions. They were freely admitted into the best society of the town and welcomed in the several church choirs. One John Phelps had a tenor voice so esteemed that the Baptist church paid him a dollar on Sunday—not fifty-two dollars per year—bargaining was closely done in those days. A little bit of Meriden romance is connected with his name. He was a general

favorite, but had made himself particularly agreeable to an eccentric maiden lady old enough to be his mother. After he left town she followed him, and sought for him in vain. Sometimes she found, or fancied she did, some trace of him. She spent much time and money in her search, during which she traversed nearly the whole of the State of New York. After a number of months thus spent she came back, by that time known to be insane, as she probably was when she left home. She remained quietly and happily interested in her own fancies until her death at an advanced age.

After leaving town John Phelps was never again heard from by any one here.

Specimens of japanned and gilded tinware made here seventy years ago may still be seen. A spice box, given by Edwin Curtis to his wife as a Christmas present, made especially to his order for the purpose, is in use still. There seems no reason why it should not last for another hundred years.

From about 1840 the value of the local tinware business declined. Of the old shops, once so numerous and so full of life and activity, not a building now remains. Fifty years ago, in proportion to the population, the trade was as important to the interests of the town as any of the large enterprises are now to the city.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### SEWING SOCIETIES.

A mong the "old friends with new faces" the old sewing societies are worth recalling. The three churches had each its own, kept exclusively to itself, but the method and management were alike in all. They met at the houses of the members; wide was the range, but the greater the distance the more enthusiastic the zeal.

Once every fortnight an announcement from the pulpit told all concerned that the "sewing society would meet at the house of Mrs. Blank." This the younger members of the family would not for the world miss hearing. They felt that they were for the time being public characters, the observed of their comrades. Very strenuous rules were made and tolerably well kept—as to the providing. Bread (this meant biscuit, mixed with cream, light and hot), butter, of course, home-dried beef or preserves—not both at one time—pickles were always allowed, cake was prohibited. The next meeting place fixed upon and the day approaching, the sacred front room was opened, swept and garnished. This meant a rubbing and dusting, over and under and all about every conceivable thing in the room, already spotless in its purity. The brass andirons had an extra polish, the wood selected and laid ready to light at the precise hour, for warmth, with, at the same time, no unnecessary use of fuel. The conical loaf of glittering, white sugar in its blue wrapping, produced from the cupboard, sacred to the keeping of delicacies. The cutting of this into lumps of a proper size was a task much

coveted by the young members of the family. The best table linen and china ascertained to be speckless and flawless, the children lectured and exhorted, under penalties, to decent behavior, and as much fuss as possible made, the preparations were complete.

It was the duty of the last "entertainer" to send the bag or basket,—both, when work was plenty or pressing, to the next place. The contents were: first, as of most importance, shirts in process of making, usually for the minister; false bosoms and collars to be made up and stitched by skilful fingers, and ordered by some one desirous of helping the society; skeins of woolen yarn to be knitted into socks, almost always for the minister; but sometimes to be fashioned into stockings ordered by some overdriven housekeeper for her family. In the "society bag" would be also certain square or diamond shaped pieces of calico to be pieced into "blocks" or "stars" for bedquilts. Added to these, if a projected fair was on the tapis, would be pieces of wedding dresses, donated to the society for making (horrible to relate) into kettle holders or pinballs; goose quills to be wound with silk and made into tooth-picks; tissue and lace papers that had been carefully hoarded for some such contingency, and other materials for the manufacture of home-made toys and knickknacks destined to coax the cash from humbugged pockets.

It was in the Pierce campaign that two dolls were dressed to represent the opposing candidates. These were put up at auction and certain enthusiastic politicians added fifty dollars to the coffers of the Episcopal Society by laying opposing bids, each zealous to outdo the other.

At the sewing society meetings it was one of the

parts and duties of the ministers to appear in the afternoons and to stay to tea. This ordeal was manfully undergone by each and all of them.

The donation parties were contemporary with the sewing societies. I think Webster's definition of humbug fitted them exactly—"an imposition under fair pretences." It would be whispered, in confidence, of course, that hemlock and chestnut wood, most despised as fuel by knowing housekeepers, were plentiful at the bottom of the loads given by the farmers; that the barrels of apples, potatoes and turnips did not always fulfil their fair promise to the eye.

These donation parties were free to all, and everybody went to them, most partaking of the supper provided for by the provisions donated. Not infrequently it was the case that all the food brought in was eaten up, the guests having, like the locusts of Egypt, devoured every green thing, except the parson and his wife. Kissing games were the favorite amusements, and the rafters rang with the chromatic concord of

"The needle's eye that doth supply  
The thread that passes through.  
I have caught many and many a lass,  
And now I have caught you."

Or this ditty:

"Green grows the rushes O,  
Kiss her quick and let her go,  
Never mind the mitten."

Sometimes when the plan of the rooms allowed it, "foot races round the chimney" made things lively. The Rev. Mr. Perkins forbade kissing at his house, except by near connections. As he did not, like the English prayer book, particularize, it was thought at

first practicable to invent relationships. But it proved not so easy to hoodwink the parson and his donation parties declined in popularity, no doubt to his much contentment.

Very seldom did the gifts compensate for what was broken, trampled upon, and wasted at these annual sanctioned parsonage frolics. Mrs. Harvey Miller had, on such an occasion, a counterpane of rare and valuable work, an inheritance from her mother, entirely ruined by the treatment of the careless young people.

But donation parties are of the things that were of the olden time. The old fashioned sewing society is superannuated. Nor, though he travel far, will the seeker find the prim parlor or "front room." True, the brass andirons have been hunted out of the garrets, polished anew and given places of honor; but they blink in astonishment at their modern environments. Merely to catalogue what is now required for the proper furnishing of our numerous church parlors would make a chapter to itself.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### BOOKS.

SEVENTY years ago the question: "Who reads an American book?" might have been truthfully answered, "There are none to read." The only books worth much were from the mother country. A book once obtained was a cherished possession. Apropos of this, the editor of the "Notes and Queries" in Boston *Transcript* told me about the introduction of Scott's "Lady of the Lake" into his home when he was a boy. He is now a man over seventy.

His mother was, as women in those days were compelled to be, an industrious person. She had made a stint for herself for her each day's spinning. She was very fond of reading, but books were few and leisure hours were fewer. She heard of the advent of the new volume, Scott's "Lady of the Lake," in the neighborhood, and she longed to read it. The only way to secure the coveted opportunity was to do double work for the day. She rose earlier and worked later, and thus secured a holiday to ride on horseback a number of miles and borrow the precious volume. She and the children were made happy for a week with it, when it was returned; but not before she had learned the contents by heart, thus securing them to herself.

Sixty years ago the only large collections of books in Meriden were owned by Dr. Hough and Fenner Bush. Dr. Hough inherited a small medical library from his father, Dr. Ensign Hough. These, except the works of Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia, were English editions.

Among the Doctor's books were English library editions of Richardson's "Pamela," and Miss Burney's "Camilla" and "Evelina." Each edition, in six volumes, bound in calf and gilt.

Dean Swift had a place, and Smollet, Fielding and Sterne. As no restriction in regard to these was laid upon me, I read, I think, all of them. This was hazardous, but the coarse allusions I did not understand, and therefore they were to me harmless.

"Don Quixote," "The Arabian Nights," "Paradise Lost," "The Pilgrims' Progress," and a satire in verse by Samuel Butler, called "Hudibras," the latter only to be found in some large libraries, came and went through my childish eyes and brain.

"The American Lady's Preceptor" was (and is) another favorite. This was published in Baltimore in 1821, and had then reached its ninth edition. Of this book I have never seen a copy, except the one in my own possession. "The Columbian Orator" had its day, and "The National Preceptor" had, in 1836, taken its place as a reading book in some of the district schools. Dr. Hough and Mr. Bush bought all the new books as they came out.

I remember "Tillman's Journal," and "Fanny Kemble's Diary," the record—and a prejudiced one—of her earliest stage experiences in America.

Children's books were few. All that were good for anything were English. Mrs. Sherwood's "Tales and Tracts," and those of her sister, Mrs. Cameron, were beloved in my childhood. Even now, I think, they have never been excelled as examples of a good, pure style. Mrs. Barbauld's "Hymns in Prose" was popular in the Saturday afternoon school exercises of the day. A class of girls would stand up and recite at the top of their

shrill voices, with all the strength of their healthy young lungs, their lithe, young bodies clad in long aprons, swaying in time to the rhythm of the words, these cheerful and appropriate sentences: "Child of Mortality, whence camest thou? Why is thy countenance sad, and thine eyes red with weeping?" "I have seen the rose in its beauty; it blushed upon its stem; its fragrance perfumed the breeze; I looked, and lo, it was gone!"

Sunday School libraries had been established, but all the books were of a severely religious character. Most of them were biographies of impossible little prigs, who, of course, died early.

In 1846, Mrs. Sigourney, of Hartford, had begun to write for children and young people. Her "Child's Book on the Soul" was one of my earliest birthday souvenirs. This book was embellished with woodcuts. One intended to convey the idea of Eternity clearly to a child's mind, was a picture of a square pile of slates, the upper layer covered with short lines—ten thousand, I think—the rest, of course, left to the imagination.

I do not see why, after allowing Smollet and Fielding, the guardian authorities should have forbidden and tried to prevent, the reading of "The Mysteries of Udolpho," "The Romance of the Forest," "The Children of the Abbey," and "Alonzo and Melissa." It was, I think, only the prohibition that made these so charming. I doubt if the most omnivorous novel reader of to-day could, or would, wade through the dreary nonsense. The heroes and heroines of those old novels got themselves out of one critical state of affairs into another with marvelous and idiotic celerity. Long and high-flown colloquy took turnabout with duels, floods of tears and fainting fits. The warm velvets and

furs of the modern novel were lacking. Instead, the lachrymose heroine wore, in all weathers, white muslin, once in a while putting on "a lace cloak," by way of comfort. The tantalizing make-believe banquets, now spread for us, would have been much too gross for those refined beings. A "slight refection" was apparently sufficient for a lifetime.

About 1836 Miss Malone introduced "Peter Parley's History and Geography" into the private school. The lessons were interesting, and children easily learned them, and, more than that, remembered what they had learned.

Speaking of school books, an extract from a letter written by Mrs. Edgar Munson, of Williamsport, Pa., will be interesting. The incident occurred in Meriden in the late twenties:

"There were humbugs in those days. Human nature in all ages has a relish for them.

"'Hall's Grammar' is now a tradition and a warning. About 1829, I should think, while the old Baptist church stood on the east side of the street, a man made his appearance with a small grammar, not nearly as large as a child's first reader—a miniature compared with Lindley Murray's then in use—and introduced this book on a stand in front of the pulpit, proclaiming to a crowded house, 'The study of grammar made easy; a perfect knowledge of the system acquired from this book in a week's time; he had but a hundred copies at a dollar apiece. Now was the time or never. No press could furnish any more of the kind.'

"People were now well brought to a sense of present advantage and a last opportunity. All the town dignitaries were present.

"Dr. Hough approved the book, and when the Rev.

Mr. Hinsdale stepped up, and with a few appropriate remarks laid down his own silver dollar, there was such a rush as was never seen in a sanctuary to receive the article, which the audience whispered to each other, was ‘going like hot cakes.’

“Wives exhorted their better halves ‘to make haste, or they would all be gone.’ Not one book was left to enlighten the absent. The man left town with his one hundred silver dollars. I can see ‘Hall’s Grammar’ before my eyes to this day and the chagrin I felt when, to my request for a new grammar, the economy of making the misspent silver dollar tell was the result.”

This was, as Mrs. Munson says, in the old Baptist church. When the new one (the Second) was built by the cemetery, one room of the basement was above the ground, and this was utilized as a favorite place for private schools.

Miss Eddy, the Rev. Mr. Atwell and the Rev. Mr. Howard had schools in it, the gentlemen only for a very short time each. They were Baptist clergymen. I think the Rev. Elijah Guion, an Episcopal clergyman, tried and failed in the attempt to keep one there.

After the present church was built the deserted building became the Meriden Academy.

Late in the thirties, one Edward Greene shot meteor-wise across our literary horizon. He started, probably, the first newspaper in Meriden. I do not remember the name of it, and do not think anybody does. Greene began in his paper a story called the “Belles of Meriden.”

For five or six weeks the young people, more especially, were kept on tiptoe with expectation at what was coming next. By this time, Greene, finding himself getting into rather deep water, brought the story, and I believe, his paper, to a close, by saying that “somebody had made off with the article.”

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### AN ANCIENT LETTER.

SOMET1ME in the latter half of the seventies Daniel Johnson bought a tract which included a part or the whole of West Peak. He probably made the purchase for its supposed mineral wealth. His son Israel inherited the property and built thereupon the finest mansion in the vicinity. The "Johnson house" stands on the high ground at the west side of the city of Meriden. This ridge extends irregularly, but continuously to the East and West rock in New Haven.

The Johnson family were among the earliest comers into the town. Dr. Hough used to tell of their advent with their "equipage." The vehicle thus dignified by the doctor was a two-wheeled gig with a canvas top. An old carriage exactly like it was shown at a Middlesex county fair early in the nineties.

The social position of the family was excellent. The father was a trial justice in colonial times. Besides the "equipage" other possessions of theirs impressed the townspeople with their quality. Silver, cut glass, and china shone on the sideboard, and on the almost sacred table linen, displayed whenever they gave a formal tea party. I remember the daughters, Miss Huldah and Miss Amanda, two formal old maids, who might have stepped bodily out of Mrs. Gaskell's "Cranford." Miss Huldah, when dressed for paying or receiving visits, always wore black silk mitts which covered her hands to the base of the fingers, leaving them bare. I have in memory a very distinct picture of her as she sat

very upright, the black silk mitts on her hands, and her fingers—not her hands, her fingers—crossed with precision, as she gave out “from the chair,” her opinion that red flannel was “very conducive to health.” The mother was an invalid, and was as formal and precise as her daughters. I was never a guest at one of the formal tea parties given by the sisters, but I used to hear my elders tell of these functions. How Miss Amanda would receive the guests and conduct them to the chairs especially allotted to them, the minister having the seat of honor, the minister’s wife next, while Miss Huldah, at the sideboard, delicately poured and mixed and combined the odorous contents of the cut glass decanters into the cut glass wine glasses. The minister and his wife were always the first served.

It would seem that neither were averse or reluctant to partake of such refreshment or uninstructed as to the quality or potency of the liquids thus dispensed. After a solemn revel of this order, the whilom guests used to chant, antiphonally, the excellence of the viands—the ethereal texture of the cream biscuit, the graciousness of waffles and honey, and the translucence of jellies and conserves brought to perfection by secret and carefully guarded rules and recipes.

A note written by Miss Huldah Johnson, to her cousin, Miss Louisa Johnson, is a very fair specimen of the familiar style of a hundred years ago. It may be explained that the young ladies lived only three or four miles apart. The letter is kindly furnished the writer by Mrs. Edgar Munson of Williamsport, Pa., whose mother, Mrs. Amos Curtis, was the “dear cousin.”

“March 8, 1812.

“DEAR COUSIN:—The bright monarch of the day appears just above the eastern hills to remind us of our

duty to our benefactor, ourselves and surrounding friends. While the sun sheds its revivifying influences on our fallen world, how many important truths do we learn—that of being up and doing while the day lasts. As the poet says:

‘Count that day lost whose low descending sun  
Views from thy hand no worthy action done.’

I read, and reprove myself for my legion of faults and errors and ingratitude. Gratitude, my friend, doubles every blessing of heaven and every enjoyment in life. It gives a new tone to our minds; it directs us to acquire happiness from unseen things which are laid in store for those that put their trust in the Lord Jesus. The winged moments of time remind us of the transient nature of earthly enjoyments. Soon we shall reach the ultimate end for which we were made. Soon we shall set to rise no more. Our journey being finished, we are prepared to say: ‘Now, lettest thy servant depart in peace, our eyes having seen thy salvation.’ May our lives be perfected in every good work, acquiring self-knowledge and self-government. When I see you we will talk of the importance of what I have stated. In the meantime, remember me at the throne of grace. Write me often, and put me under obligations to you. It is not my design to make uncle impatiently wait for my comments upon the honored visit he had condescended to make; the medium of words is insufficient were I to attempt to describe the satisfaction. Do encourage the visiting, and hope we shall soon see you. My kind remembrance to all.

“From your cousin,

“HULDAH JOHNSON.”

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

AND LAST.

THE year 1799 opened with the wonderful turnpike road completed between New York and Boston. The citizens of Meriden were elated with the prospect of good things to be brought to them by the new system of rapid transit. The stages brought glimpses of city fashions as the passengers stopped at the famous "Hough's Tavern," the "Halfway House," to dine or sleep; for the journey of two hundred miles was thought a long and arduous one, and feeble folk were fain to rest on the way. People built houses along the great new road with "modern improvements," and environed them with fruit trees and flowering shrubs grown from stock brought over the sea from English homes. For thirty years the town grew slowly, yet there was an advance of prosperity.

Dr. Hough, James L. Brooks (afterwards Judge Brooks), Major Elisha Allen Cowles, Patrick Lewis and Elias Holt had each built handsome and commodious houses. Lewis built the house owned by Eli Birdsey, 497 Broad street. Holt built the house owned by Mrs. Russell Coe, 283 East Main street. In 1836 an enterprising Hartford baker sent, once each month, a wagon with crackers and cookies into town; and a merchant with advanced ideas had often a whole box of oranges on hand at once. Young ladies went to the Hartford or New Haven boarding schools, returning to Meriden from Saturday to Monday, as the journey could be made by the stage in three hours. Letters came from

Boston or New York in thirty-six hours. In 1836 letters sent from Meriden to Middlebury, eighteen miles west were a week in transit, and the postage was "nine-pence,"—twelve and a half cents.

In the first half of the century the "emancipation of women" was in the future. They were themselves mainly responsible for the unwritten but rigid rules relating to dress. She was a woman of courage who would venture to violate or even to infringe upon these oral laws. For one thing, a matron of thirty must wear a cap, or be considered a vain and frivolous person. A dress cap of 1836 was an impressive structure of puffs and frills with loops and bows of wire stiffened ribbon and floating lappets and strings. Jewelry was not permitted, unless an exception was made in respect of a gold watch. Diamonds were never seen, although one family had in possession a diamond stock buckle, and a pair of shoe buckles. It must be noted these were for masculine adornment, and although the day had hardly gone when professional men were brave in frilled shirt bosoms and wrist ruffles, for woman such vain frippery as lace frills at the neck or wrists was not permitted. A muslin kerchief neatly folded and crossed on the bosom was the proper finish to a decorous costume. As the limitations in apparel were of the sex's own setting there was, of course, in them no trial or grievance—at any rate worth mentioning. The real hardship for a married woman was in the laws depriving her of rights in property which she had inherited or had helped to get together. A married woman had practically no right in her husband's wealth, except by his will. A woman might manage her husband and all his concerns for a lifetime, yet at his death she was judged incapable of taking care of what he left.

An extreme case of the kind occurred at the east side of the town. The husband dying intestate, the property was so managed, that the widow, whose personal labor and economy had made her home one of unusual comfort, was made to take as part of her "portion" two small rooms at the back of the house and was not allowed the use of the front door. Two friends visited her and she set her tea things on an old chest. One of her children when reproved for allowing this state of things excused it by saying, "of course it was hard for mother, but there was nothing wrong about it for it was the law." But, as was before said, this was an extreme case, showing, however, what the old law could be made to do.

In those days St. Paul was a much quoted authority, and a favorite apostle of the husbands and fathers (lovers are pretty much the same always).

St. Paul's prophetic soul must have looked into the latter days of the nineteenth century when he felt himself impelled to confess that, in some things, he did not speak from inspiration. There is a long step between "Parson" Hubbard in knee breeches, long black silk stockings and muslin neck bands, and the clergyman of 1899 in straw hat or fur cap or any other comfortable headgear, coat and trousers of fashionable cut and neckwear of such form and color as pleases the wearer thereof. The parson of 1800 made his round of parochial visits on horseback; he sipped with grave relish his frequent modicum of wine or spirits, and while thus refreshing the inner man he made suitable inquiry of the "state of their souls." He was solemn, never laughed in public, seldom even smiled. At each visit he read a chapter from the Bible and made a long prayer; a family would feel themselves slighted were

the prayers made short. His visits were, to the children, a sort of sanctified nightmare, and if they saw him coming they ran and hid. His Sunday sermons were dry, doctrinal essays, an hour in delivering, or he did not earn his salary.

The minister of 1840 preached, every Sunday, two sermons of at least forty-five minutes; he conducted a Sunday school at noon, he held a Bible class towards night and had a service in the evening. He never took a vacation. A good deal was expected of him and he did it, and, no wonder, broke down and lost his voice.

The minister of today finds plenty of work to do. Guilds, brotherhoods, societies of many names, but all having "church work" for an object, require his supervision. So far as possible he keeps his mind and body in condition to accomplish what his position demands. He rides a wheel, he knows enough of secular business to be a good adviser. His people confide the key of their skeleton closet to his keeping and he holds it close. The children like him, he does not puzzle their heads with abstruse questions, nor are they made to "stand up and say their verses," for which mercy he and they ought to be devoutly thankful. He plays ball with his Sunday-school boys—and he can beat them if he wants to. Even farther and still farther into the past the old days are drifting. With them are passing the old prejudices with their ineffable Pharisaism.

In the sixties a leading Congregational paper gravely warned its readers against a recognition of Christmas, or Lent, or Easter, as a "tendency toward Popery." The Meriden Christmas of 1842 saw one poor little church decked in Christmas green, hemlock and laurel, proud of its new four hundred dollar organ. The Christmas of 1898 sees twenty churches vying with

each other in arch and pillar, pulpit and platform and altar wreathed with woven vines and berried holly from Southern lands. The great organs that uphold vested choirs and trained voices in anthem and chant and psalm, have cost more than four times four thousand dollars.

In all the churches the Lenten season will be, at least, recognized. On the other hand the season will be less rigorously kept by the sects to whom the observance was once peculiar. By all, Easter will be heralded with heaped up lilies and roses and hyacinths, where once no flower had a place within chancel, or on altar or platform. Denominational exclusiveness is being done away with. In works of charity and mercy, in purposes and motives for future public advantage, all the religious sects work together, "owning one Master."

Sometime in the fifties, Bishop Clark of Rhode Island lectured in the old Broad street Methodist church. The lecture was "Fifty Years Hence." It was, of course, witty. One sentence, and one only, of that lecture, is now recalled. The bishop used the words "going from New York to San Francisco in four days." This was greeted with a chorus of laughter. Yet the prediction is fulfilled, or nearly.

A walk of a mile shows windows heaped with tawny golden globes, and great clusters of grapes hang heavy and plump with juices fresh as when they were gathered from vines growing upon the shores of the Pacific ocean.

As I bring to a close these desultory records and memories of a "dear dead day," old scenes crowd upon my mental sight and are loath to leave me. I believe, as I walk abroad, I shall go in the old irregular grassy paths and shall traverse the old uneven streets. The

East cemetery is again a bare upland meadow, and near the bars that lead into it is the barnlike Methodist church, with its bare wooden benches and packing box pulpit. To this house, one bleak, snowy January day, queer "Preacher" Baldwin brought his infant child to be baptized by himself, his wife the only witness. He had the grace and mercy to borrow a bowl of warm water. Here, too, Kate Andrews and the two inseparable Francis's "played church." As a theatre for their histrionic accomplishments the building did not long remain. It was bought by Horace Redfield, moved onto Curtis street and made into a joiner's shop. It was finally set on fire by some children playing in the old pulpit, and was burned to the ground. The house at present the home of Frank Treat Southwick stands pretty nearly on the spot.

The old Broad street cemetery has once more the Baptist and the Episcopal churches, the school house and the old hearse house at each corner, with the low stone wall between. The long line of posts and chains front the grassy path between the churches where the churchgoers fasten their horses. The poor beasts, impatient with the four or five hours standing, kick and squeal and fight, and go altogether as much on a rampage as their tether will allow. This varies the Sunday monotony, besides giving the not at all reluctant owners an excuse for cutting short the afternoon sermon.

Once more at St. Andrew's, Edwin Curtis gives, on his bass viol the keynote for chant and psalm and hymn. I go up the high steps into the Baptist church, where, once upon a time, at an ordination, "Uncle Sam" Yale, zealous for the success of the musical programme and distrusting, as even the most competent sometimes do, his own and Captain Howard's skill on bass viol and

double bass, seized an opportune, but at that time very rare, hand organ, had it conveyed into the choir, and a voluntary performed on the instrument to the much satisfaction of the listeners thereto. The time moves on; the clear tones of the Rev. Harvey Miller's voice ring out as he preaches, what, in his daily life, he practices, the Gospel of Peace. The little, white building, the first St. Andrew's, is now the mission where has since grown the stately buildings of St. Rose's Parish. Fair in its proportions, rises, at the corner of Charles street, the coveted stone church, the second St. Andrew's. Here, the Rev. Dr. Deshon began his ministry of more than thirty years. From out its chancel Bishop Brownell, worn with cares, bowed with years, went for the last time, and Bishop Williams entered in the prime of manhood, tall and commanding in person, impressive in manner.

But Memory, the showman, has withdrawn the canvas, and all the ground is empty space. The portal of the Center church is not altered. It is the same as when it was built seventy years ago, but, when I enter, I find a change in the once familiar precincts. A platform and choir seats and the great organ take the place of the crimson-draped pulpit, from which in 1849, the Rev. G. W. Perkins preached a farewell sermon to the party who left Meriden for the gold fields of California, from the depressive text, "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him ; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." Sorrowful words and significant ; for of those who left Meriden that night, some were left in lonely graves ; others had no wish to see again their "native country" and made new home-ties. None returned rich save in experience.

When, early in the thirties, William Lawrence, of Meriden, invented a hanging lamp with a glass shade, in which whale oil displaced candles, it was thought a far stride in the world's progress. Burning fluid, kerosene and gas, each in their turn, have followed the whale oil lamps; now in this year of grace, 1899, the forces of nature are concentrated, and with a touch, street and avenue, hall and audience room, are flooded with cool, brilliant light. Nor is the time distant when the electric fluid will lighten all domestic labor, and the smoke and ashes and grime of coal in our kitchens be a forgotten nuisance.

The substantial and elegant stone dwelling house (the home of Francis Atwater of *The Journal*) stands in the place of the old "Hough tavern." Four times each hour the electric cars pass the house, and cross the road where before them, twice each day, the lumbering stages swung clumsily up to the piazza at the old hosfelry.

The old Broad Street cemetery has been opened, it is likely, for the last time. Within the last ten years three aged women have been buried there. The last was taken there by her dying wish that she might be buried by the side of her little child, who dropped from her arms and never grew up; who, for sixty years, had always been her baby girl.

When, in 1845, the East cemetery was laid out, it was supposed ample allowance for the future had been made. Ira N. Yale took great interest in the project, and it was through his influence that the principal avenues were bordered by flowering shrubs, altheas, most of them. The expense of building the stone arch at the entrance was very seriously objected to by the citizens on the west side of town, and I believe it was

partly for this reason the West cemetery was planned. When the location was chosen it was talked of as being quite isolated.

The first interment in it was a little child. On a very plain headstone in a crowded part of the ground, is the inscription:

“ Her name was Ellah,  
And by this silent grave she passed away.”

For a while the little grave was a lonely one.

The brilliant electric light throws long shadows from the elm branches over the graves of men and women who rose while it was dark and were lighted by dim candles to their early labors. By candlelight they read their one weekly religious newspaper carefully, accepting everything therein printed as articles of faith.

The summers and the winters followed each other as surely with them as with us, but time seemed to move more slowly then. In those days events did not crowd each other. So they did the work of each season as it came, not worrying overmuch or hurrying at all, but making a virtue of hard labor, and a vice of “taking things easy.” To find something to do and to work hard to get the thing done was, to them, the whole duty of man. For all that, commonplace as those lives seemed in their passing, now that it is all over and done with, a plain narrative of all that lies buried out of sight in the old Broad street burial place would make an emotional tale almost too improbable for belief.

Under the yellow myrtle and the purple asters lie those who despaired of life in the bitterness of disappointed ambition; who endured the weary waiting of hope deferred or the grief for friends lost, or changed, or dead. The gladness of fulfilled promises was theirs in their time, and upon some of them fell that most hopeless

and most heartbreaking of all the disappointments of life—"the curse of a granted prayer."

We try to consider how, if they could suddenly be quickened into our everyday life, they would look upon the changed world about them. Nothing familiar to the eye when they went away would their amazed gaze rest upon—except, perhaps, the mountains, and upon their steep fells the finger of time has written.

The year 1899 opens with the little town of three thousand grown into the city of nearly thirty thousand people.

It finds the Meriden Hospital permanently founded, with increasing appliances for future useful work.

A Free Public Library is hopefully initiated, with tokens of prosperity in the new century.

Cultivated discernment has found rare possibilities in the wild steep mountain side that liberal wealth is rapidly turning into a benison for the city, and not for the city alone, but almost equally for the adjacent towns.

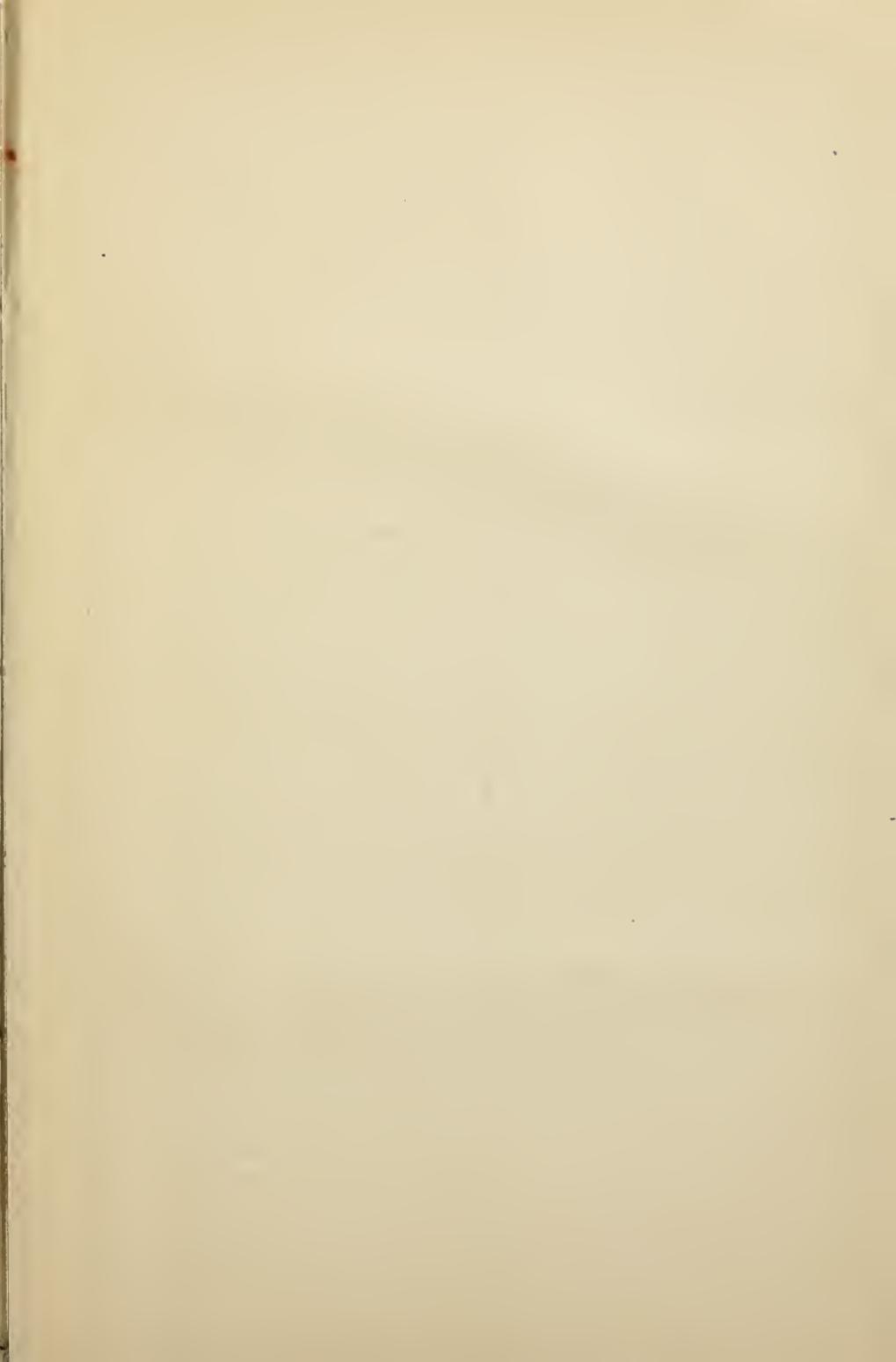
Hubbard Park is beautiful now, when it is yet in its early days; very unique, even sublime, are the natural features of the locality. Rare and admirable is the far-sighted munificence which has moved the donor to develop their beauties, and to confer upon the city so large a benefaction.

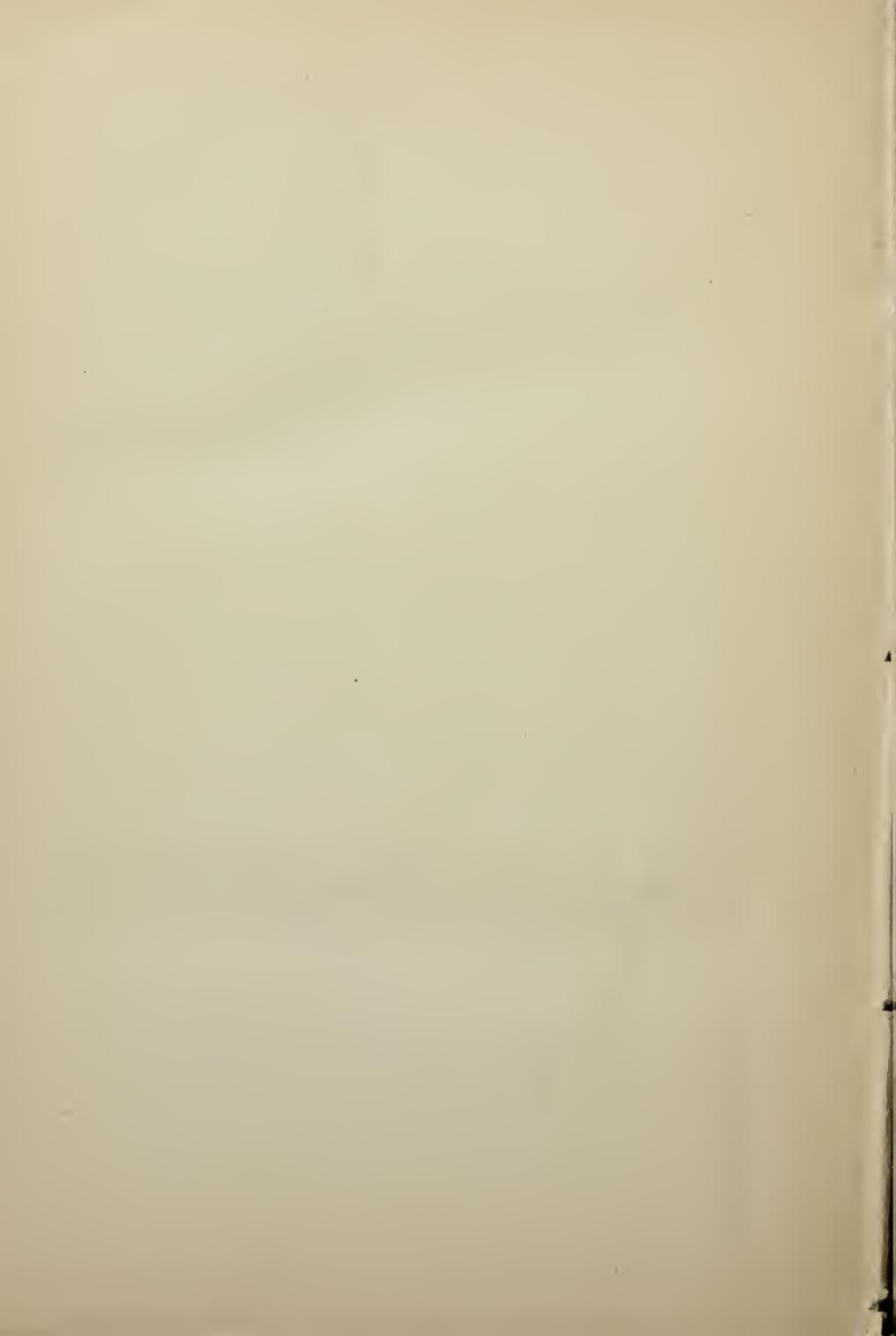
When the years of the future have drifted far into the past, and the nineteenth century has become the "Olden Days," this great gift will be—so long as the "Hanging Hills" guard the city—an acquisition of good, growing in utility of possession to future generations.

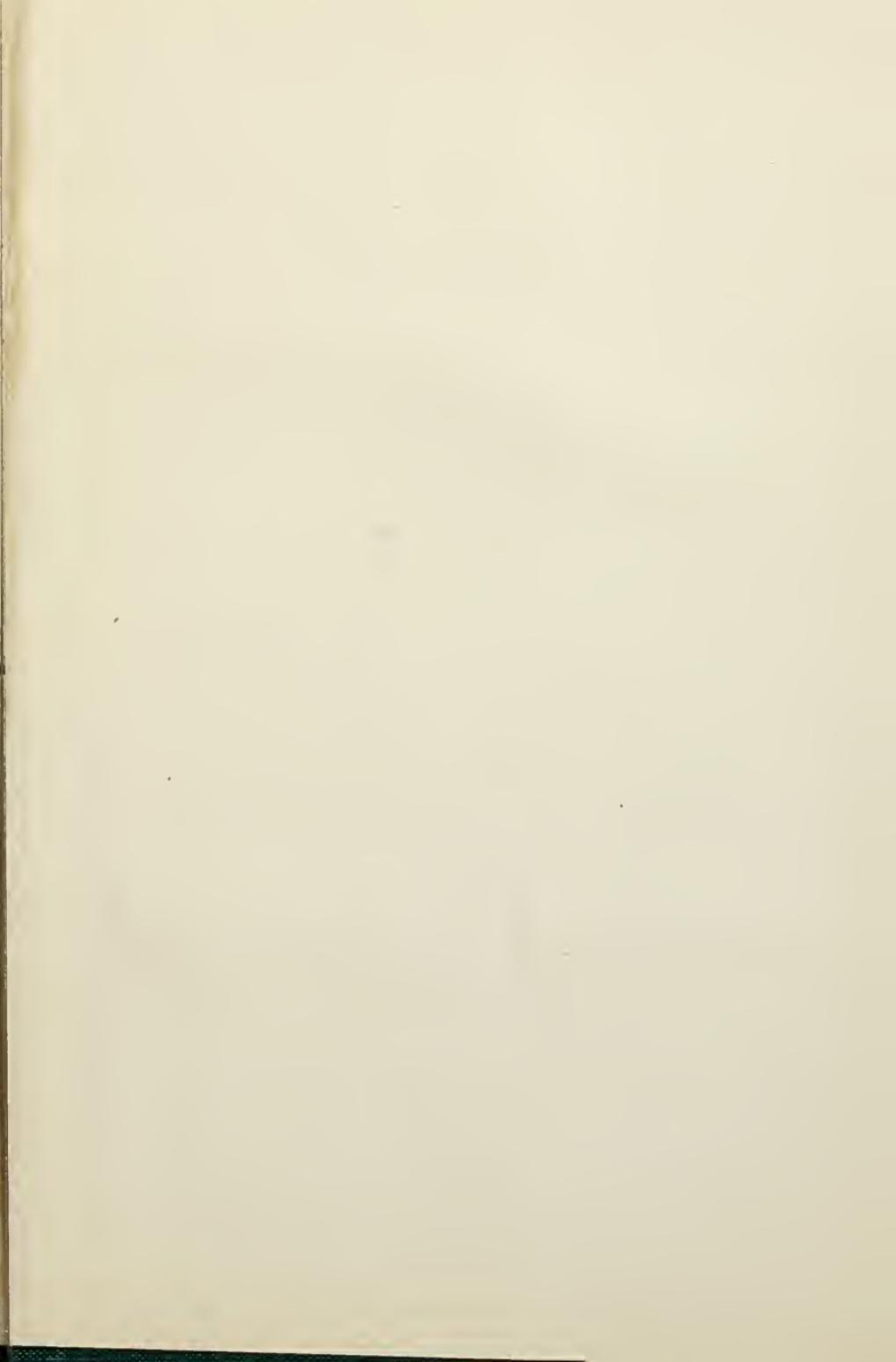
As I bring to an end these traditions of more than a century and a half, more than sixty years my own personal memories, I feel a vexatious conviction that, after

all, I have omitted many things not less of interest than much I have written.

Our beautiful city has sons and daughters in every State in the Union, who think of its hills with love, longing for their early home. From the shores of the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, and far away to the northern line, hundreds know the name only as the home of their ancestors, whose dust lies under the turf of our cemeteries.











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